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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[LOOKING AT THE PICTURE OF VIOLET TREFUSIS, KATY FOUND THE TEARS WELLING UP INTO HER EYES.]

WILFUL KATY.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

SHE had no home, and what was almost sadder, she could not even remember the time when she possessed one, which statement does not mean, as one might almost fancy, that she was a street beggar or a nameless waif brought up by public charity.

Katy had been at school ever since she was four years old. The principal of Minerva Lodge had chosen the child's clothes when she wore little socks and strap shoes, and she continued to choose them now when Katy was past eighteen, and the eldest girl in the school; but this was by no means benevolence on the part of Miss Johnson.

Sir Lionel Trefusis, Baronet, received somewhat lengthy accounts for his grandchild's education, board, and clothing every term, and sent Miss Johnson a cheque in settlement

of the same, generally by return of post; but he never made the slightest inquiry as to Katy's progress or welfare.

Minerva Lodge was in one of the best known roads in Malda Vale, and the Trefusis family always spent the season in London, but not one of them had ever called at Miss Johnson's establishment.

Never once had Katy been invited to cross the threshold of the tall house near Park-lane where her grandfather gave the most delightful dances, and Sir Lionel received the most distinguished men in London.

If Miss Johnson had been an unprincipled woman, she might have pocketed the baronet's money and neglected Katy.

But she was a good, motherly soul, whose heart went out in warm affection to the lonely child, and whose conscientious scruples only made her more particular over the accounts she sent Sir Lionel, just because she knew no item of them would ever be disputed.

Minerva Lodge was a flourishing school, but the pupils were chiefly of the upper middle-class. Katy was the only one who could boast of titled relations. She was very pretty,

and so winning in her bright, impetuous ways that she was a favourite with all the girls.

Very few of them had relations in London, and those few moved in very different circles from that adorned by Sir Lionel Trefusis, so that Katy's desolate position never seemed to her companions strange.

"She is an orphan," they would say, in speaking of her to their parents, "and her grandfather is quite old, so she stays with Miss Johnson holidays and all. I do wish she could spend them with us."

But though more than one warm-hearted matron asked Miss Johnson to let her young friend visit them, the invitation was always courteously declined.

"Katy must be content with my company in the holidays," Miss Johnson would say, pleasantly, "for I promised her grandfather never to lose sight of her," and the lady invariably departed with the conviction that if an exception could have been made to this arbitrary rule it would have been in her favour.

It was towards the close of the summer holidays. In another ten days Minerva

Lodge would be filled with cheery, youthful voices; but just now the principal and Katy were alone there.

They had come back from their stay at Scarborough only the night before, because Miss Johnson always liked to be at home a week before school reopened in case people called about new pupils.

The big dining-room was deserted and breakfast was laid in Miss Johnson's private anctum, a very cosy little room on the ground floor.

There was nothing suggestive of "school" in the hot rolls, French coffee, and new-laid eggs, which were on the table; neither, to tell the truth, was Miss Johnson at all like the regulation idea of a school mistress.

She was nearer fifty than forty, had a pleasant, motherly face, a comfortable, rather stout figure, and a pair of bright, dark eyes which hardly anything escaped.

She was a lady by birth, but her father had a large family, and left them totally unprovided for. Her childhood had been spent in an orphan asylum, her youth in the solitude which is the fate of governesses in families of rank, and her one ambition had been a home of her own.

For years she pinched and saved out of her salary; but she was turned thirty before a legacy from her godfather joined to her treasured hoard enabled her to purchase the lease, goodwill, furniture, and fixtures of Minerva House.

She worked hard at first; later on, when success came, and she could afford a competent staff of assistants, she took things more easily; but every detail was still under her own superintendence, and, apart from her school, she was the never failing referee of three married sisters and their families who seemed to regard "Aunt Susan" as existing solely for their benefit and convenience.

Miss Johnson had achieved greater prosperity than she had ever dreamed of, in fact there was a tidy sum invested in her name in consols, and if she had felt disposed to retire, the school would have sold well, its price and her own savings providing handsomely for her remaining days. Clearly, therefore, the principal of Minerva Lodge had no very pressing personal cares, and yet there was a decided cloud on her brow as she perused her letters on this fair September morning.

Katy Trefusis noticed it and wondered. She was honestly fond of Miss Johnson, and did not like to see her look troubled. Katy herself looked the picture of careless girlhood, in a blue serge skirt, and pale pink, gingham blouse, belted in to her slim waist by a band of fashionable crocodile leather. Her sunny hair was coiled round her graceful little head, her brown eyes sparkled with merriment, and the sun and sea air had given just a suspicion of sunburn to her usually pale face.

"What is the matter?" she demanded at last, with a freedom of speech which would have horrified those accustomed to see great respect paid by girls to their teacher. "Dear Miss Johnson, you look just as though you had something on your mind so dreadful that it had taken away your appetite."

Miss Johnson smiled. It was impossible to help it when she saw the twinkle in Katy's eye, even though the girl herself was the chief subject of her anxiety.

"Have you finished breakfast, Katy?" she asked, kindly, "because, if so, we will go into the music room, as I have a great deal to say to you."

Katy pouted. "I have quite finished, but you have touched nothing. Dear Miss Johnson give me just a hint. Has Franklin written to say she can't possibly come back unless you send me away, because my love of practical jokes is too much for her Tontin dignity?"

"Franklin is devoted to you, Katy," returned Miss Johnson, "though you have frightened her nearly into fits more than once. Come along, the maids will be wanting to

clear the table, and I may keep you some time."

The music room was a mere slip at the end of the hall, and Miss Johnson, who was not without a few fads, had had the walls lined with a peculiar substance which rendered them sound-proof. With twenty boarders and an absolute necessity for three pianos to be continually going, she had hit on this plan of securing comparative quiet. The three pianos were on three different floors in tiny rooms immediately beneath each other, and to the walls of each the same wonderful process had been applied. It had cost a good deal, but Susan Johnson always declared it was worth it, since the house was as quiet as though twenty damsels had not been studying music there.

The window was open and a sweet scent of late mignonette came in from the flower-box on the sill. The principal sat down on a narrow sofa which ran along the wall opposite the window, she would have invited Katy to a seat beside her, but the girl took possession of the music stool, and wheeling it round till she faced her teacher, said, with just a suspicion of irritation in her clear voice.

"Please make haste. You know, Goody, I never could bear suspense."

She had called Miss Johnson "Goody" when she came to her first, a tiny child of four, and she had kept to it ever since, only that since she had grown older some instinct had made her reserve the old pet name for when they two were alone.

"I have heard from your grandfather," began Miss Johnson, rather tremulously, touching a black-edged letter in her hand.

"You mostly do hear three times a year," said Katy, rather bitterly. "I suppose Sir Lionel has sent a cheque as usual, done up in a blank sheet of paper, just as though gold was everything and money could in any way repay your kindness."

"Hush, dear!" said the principal, quietly. "Sir Lionel means well, and this time he has written me quite a long letter."

"How extremely condescending! Pray does he suggest I am old enough to earn my own living? To tell you the truth, Goody, I am quite ready. I had rather work than owe my support to a proud old man who cares nothing about me, and you'd always let me come to you in my holidays."

"I have always a home for you, Katy, as long as I live," said Miss Johnson, affectionately; "but, oh, my dear, you don't understand! Sir Lionel has sent me a great deal of money. I am to fit you out with everything you can require, and send you down next week," she was reading from the Baron's letter now, "under trustworthy guardianship, to Trefusis Castle."

Katy Trefusis smiled rather mischievously. "I fancy that is a task beyond you, Goody, unless, indeed, you pack me up in a hamper securely fastened and labelled 'this side upwards, with care.' I am old enough to decide my own abode now, and I certainly shall not make it at Trefusis Castle."

Miss Johnson looked aghast. She did not expect open rebellion from her pretty pupil. "Trefusis Castle is one of the loveliest seats in Yorkshire," she began.

"I haven't seen any country seats in Yorkshire or anywhere else, so I am not in a position to offer an opinion."

"Katy," cried her old friend, despairingly, "you'll drive me frantic if you talk like that."

The girl's mood changed then. She put one hand on the principal's shoulder, and said, gently, almost remorsefully,—

"I am horrid to bother you, Goody; but though I would do a great deal to please you, I can't go to Trefusis Castle."

"Way not?"

"Because I consider Sir Lionel and his wife have treated me abominably."

"My dear, they have provided for you most liberally for years."

"They have paid money for my support,"

corrected Katy, "have flown their charity as one flings a bone to a dog. Why, supposing you had been a bad woman, Goody, you might have clothed me in rags, and fed me on bread and water, without their being any the wiser."

The same thought had occurred to Miss Johnson; but she only said,—

"Their great trust in me has always made me feel anxious to deserve it. Even if you had not been my favourite pupil, Katy, I should have done my utmost for you."

"I know," nodded Katy, "but that doesn't make their conduct any better. That girl we met at Scarborough told me a lot about them. She once visited a few miles from the Castle, and went over it one of the show days. She seemed to think it wonderful that I had never seen it."

"You mean Brenda Yorke. She was a charming girl; but you should not have let her prejudice you against your family."

"She didn't. She described Sir Lionel as the handiest old man she had ever seen, and his wife as a kind of empress. She said they had one granddaughter always living with them, and a grandson who spent all his spare time there, and that though these two had been brought up together from childhood, their darling plan was a marriage between them till Miss Trefusis died last winter. I thought," went on Katy, dreamily, "it was hard on them that the granddaughter they idolised should be taken, and the one they despised, that's me, Goody, left."

Miss Johnson drew a long breath of relief. Then she took a sudden resolve: since Katy had heard something of the family politics, she had better tell her all she knew.

"Nearly twenty years ago, Katy, when I began to earn my own living, I went as governess to Lady Trefusis's two little girls; and for seven long years I remained at Trefusis Castle."

"Then you knew my father?" whispered Katy; it was the first time his name had ever crossed her lips.

"I knew them all. Lady Trefusis had six children, four of them older than my little pupils. When I went to the Castle first, Norman, the heir, was at Oxford, and Lionel, the second son, had just got his commission; Hilda, the beautiful eldest daughter, came out the very next spring. After these three there came a great gap. Your father was five years younger than Hilda, and more than six years older than my little pupils—he was one by himself as it were. His father and mother were wrapped up in the three elder ones, and the little girls were quite too young to be companions for him. While I was at the Castle he used to come a good deal to the schoolroom. You see, I was only five years older than he, and I looked on him almost as a younger brother. I had more time to think over things than Lady Trefusis in her fashionable career; and, somehow all along, I seemed to feel they went the wrong way to work with Algernon. He was a young man of twenty when my pupils were sent to school and I left the Castle; even then the troubles with his father had begun. Sir Lionel wanted him to take orders; there was a good living in the family, and it was an easy way of providing for him, but Algernon loved art, and would not hear of any other career."

"And my mother?" asked Katy, hesitatingly. "Did you ever see her?"

But Miss Johnson could only tell her story in her own way.

"After I left the Castle I had other situations, but I never stayed so long anywhere else; and when I was nearly thirty I came into a little money, and was able to buy the goodwill of this school. Oddly enough the solicitor who acted for the lady of whom I purchased it was a gentleman I had sometimes met at Trefusis Castle—Sir Lionel's adviser in fact—and he gave me somewhat of the family. Norman, the heir, was dead; Lionel had married an heiress, left the army, and lived in the old dowry house near his parents; beautiful Hilda, who had sold herself

for ambition, found herself grievously disappointed, for the old lord to whom her husband was heir-presumptive had suddenly taken a wife and been blessed with a son of his own, so that her expectations of being a peeress had crumbled away.

"Your father had been cast off by his family, because he had married one of his own models. Don't tremble, my darling," and the kindly woman pressed Katy's hand. "Your mother was a good, true-hearted girl, and though she worked for her bread, she was as proud in her way as Sir Lionel Trefusis in his. She had become a model rather than a saint on the grudging charity of some relations; she never 'sat' to any artist save your father, for he fell in love with her at first sight, and married her after a few weeks. This was all Mr. Ashton could tell me. I was a busy woman, or I think I should have tried to seek out Algernon, and offer my friendship to his wife. The years passed, and I heard nothing more, till one day a card was brought me with Sir Lionel's name on it, and I went down to the drawing-room, wondering what could have induced him to honour me with a visit."

Katy drew a long breath.

"He wanted you to take me!"

"He said he had just come from Algernon's funeral; that there was one child for whom he must find a home, and would I undertake the charge. Mrs. Algernon died at her baby's birth. By his wife's marriage settlements her own fortune must pass to her younger children—it was two thousand pounds a piece—and Algernon's child would have his share. Neither he nor Lady Trefusis would be able to do more for her, and it seemed a pity to bring her up among her cousins, who were all in prosperous circumstances."

"In short, he offered you the money, if you would take me."

"And I refused. I told him I would take his grandchild, and do my duty by her, but I would have no fixed sum. I would send in my charges just as for an ordinary pupil, and if he thought them too high he could write and say so. He gave me the address of some poverty-stricken lodging beyond Peckham and said I could fetch you when I liked."

"Just as though I were a parcel. Well," and Katy drew herself up proudly, "at least there's one comfort—I don't owe that horrid old man any gratitude. If two thousand pounds comes to me after my grandmother's death, it will be a provision for my old age; and if he won't allow you anything till I get that, why, I must work."

Miss Johnson hesitated.

"My dear Katy, be reasonable and go to Trefusis Castle. That Sir Lionel treated your father harshly I admit, but they were reconciled on Algernon's deathbed. I don't think your gentle mother, who died after just one year of wedded life, would wish her child to perpetuate strife for her sake."

"I don't mean to go to Trefusis," said Katy, resolutely; "they'd always be throwing Violet's perfections in my teeth, and wishing I had died instead of her. By-the-way, who was she?"

"Your first cousin."

"I know," rather emphatically, "but how? Whose child was she? One of your old pupils?"

"No, Violet was the only child of Lionel and his heiress wife. Death has been very busy among your kindred, Katy. Sir Lionel has lost his three sons, and two of his daughters. Of his six children only Hildred Beverley survives. Her eldest son lives almost entirely at the Castle, and no doubt he was the grandson Miss Yorke said was engaged to Violet Trefusis."

"And he will be the next baronet?"

"I really do not know," said the schoolmistress, simply. "He acts as his grandfather's bailiff and general manager. Sir Lionel is getting an old man now, Katy. He must be seventy-five at least."

"Well," said Miss Trefusis, slowly, "I

don't wish him any harm, but I shall not go and stay with him. Why, he might think I wanted him to adopt me instead of Violet."

She ran right out of the room, and poor Miss Johnson took out Sir Lionel's letter and read again the closely written pages.

"It was only after a long consultation with my lawyer, Mr. Ashton, that I realised, apart from our grief at losing our darling Violet, the terrible consequences of her death. From her childhood it had been arranged she should marry her cousin, Kenneth Beverley, and bring him not only the large fortune she inherited from her mother, but the whole of my estate."

"In the first shock of Violet's loss, although I knew the Carboneil property reverted to that family, I never dreamed but that my grandson could succeed at my death to all else that would have been hers. To my trouble and dismay, Ashton assures me I cannot leave Kenneth a shilling of my property or an acre of my estate. That child of a girl, with whom you have been burdened all these years, takes everything, every jot and tittle; even my wife's ten thousand pounds cannot go intact to poor Hilda and her family. The half can be claimed by Algernon's daughter. In a word, to explain the awful calamity as briefly as I can, at my death my only daughter will benefit; nothing, and that low-born child, issue of a marriage I always deplored, will take Trefusis Castle and ten thousand a year."

"There is only one thing for it; she must marry Kenneth. It is a terrible sacrifice for my grandson to wed a little barbarian, but it is better than depriving him of what he has been taught to look on as his inheritance."

Then followed the directions about Katy's outfit and escort to Trefusis. A postscript, evidently an afterthought, recommended that she should not be told either of her rights or of the matrimonial scheme already made on her behalf."

Susan Johnson could have shaken the old baronet, so indignant did she feel on her favourite's behalf.

"Whatever happens," reflected the principal, who had a good amount of common sense, "they can't do my dear girl out of her rights. She must have Trefusis and the income, however much Sir Lionel objects. It would only make her uncomfortable if she knew about Kenneth Beverley. I can trust Katy not to marry any man she does not love, and really, if she could care about her cousin, it would be a very suitable arrangement, and save the family a great deal of trouble. I am glad she only asked if Mr. Beverley would be the next baronet, not if he was her grandfather's heir. Ah, well, I shall have my work cut out to persuade Kate into going to the Castle; but I hope I shall succeed. I am quite sure if they once knew her they would grow fond of her; they could not help it, she is such a dear little thing."

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Katy left her schoolmistress she went straight to her own room, put on her hat and jacket, and went out with a very determined expression on her pretty face.

Miss Trefusis had not the least intention of running away, she was too fond of Miss Johnson to have made her seriously uneasy; besides, the girl was no coward, but had the courage of her opinions, she would have told Sir Lionel to his face she did not wish to go and stay with him, just as frankly as she had said it in his absence.

She was bound on a very important undertaking; she wanted to see Brenda Yorke and cross question that young lady pretty closely about Trefusis Castle and its inmates.

Miss Yorke had never seen one of the family "to speak to," but she had stayed in the neighbourhood, and would certainly be up in their doings.

She was little older than Katy, and that wilful young lady had taken a great fancy to

her, perhaps because Brenda was as homeless as herself, and already earned her own living.

Miss Yorke had been at Scarborough with some cousins, and Katy knew that she was looking out for another situation, and hoped to enter on it soon after her return to London. It was just possible, therefore, Brenda might not be "at home" when her friend reached the address given her; but all the same it was worth trying, and Miss Katy took an omnibus to Victoria-station, and then the train to Brixton, in the very best of spirits, the very independence of the expedition delighting her; for if there were one thing she dearly loved, it was novelty and her own way.

It was between eleven and twelve when she reached the handsome house on Brixton-hill where Mrs. Henderson, Brenda's cousin, resided, and Katy began to fear such an early visit from a stranger might not please the widow; but the neat maid, who opened the door, assured her Miss Yorke was at home, and in another moment the girls were greeting each other as warmly as though they had been parted years instead of ten days. Mrs. Henderson looking on with benevolent sympathy, begging Katy to stay to lunch, and assuring her with a meaning smile that Brenda had "a great deal to tell her," and then she left them alone together.

"I have heaps to say," confessed Katy; "but I'd rather hear your news first, you look so ridiculously happy. I expect you have heard of a situation that's perfectly charming all round."

"I had just taken a situation that promised well," admitted Miss Yorke, with a blush; "but have changed my mind, and shall write and decline it after all."

"And shall you stay on with Mrs. Henderson?"

"For a little while," Brenda blushed again, she seemed to have a trick of it this morning. "I—I am going to be married in November, Katy."

"Oh!" Katy was just a little taken aback. Of love and lovers she knew absolutely nothing, such things not forming part of the course of study at Minerva Lodge. "Oh! why didn't you make up your mind before you took the situation?"

Miss Yorke explained that "he" had only spoken out last night. They had always been "friends," and she had often fancied he cared for her; but he was so honourable he would not say anything until his prospects improved.

He had a first-rate post now as classical master at a public school. He would enter on his new duties after Christmas, and be married in November.

"A schoolmaster!" Katy's tone was not very sympathetic. "Why, Brenda, it's almost as bad as teaching yourself; but I dare say Mr. Hargrave's very nice; and, oh! darling, I do hope you will be happy."

Of that Miss Yorke seemed positive. She indulged in a brief biographical sketch of her "Charley," which represented him as the most gifted and brilliant creature the world had ever produced.

She implored Katy to promise to be her bridesmaid; and then coming down, with an effort, to common-place matters, she begged to hear all her friend had to tell her.

"My news is very flat after yours," said Katy, simply. "Do you remember telling me about Trefusis Castle?"

"Perfectly! I know your name struck me at once. I guessed you must be related to Sir Lionel, and you said you were his grandchild, but had never seen him."

"Well, he wishes to remedy that defect in my education," said Katy, demurely, "and has invited me to the Castle next week on a long visit."

"How extraordinary!" cried Brenda.

"Well, I suppose it is," admitted Katy, who, however, had not quite expected this remark, "considering he has not troubled his head about me for fourteen years; but I'm not going all the same!"

"I meant it was an extraordinary coinci-

dance that but for my promise to Charley I should be going to Trefusis Castle next week. There is nothing odd in your grandfather's inviting you there, but it would have been strange if you and I had met there."

"Yes," said Katy, her good temper perfectly restored, "it would indeed; but were you really going? I did not think you knew them."

"More I do. An old schoolfellow of mine lives within a drive of the Castle, and on my visits to her I have got to know all the Trefusis family by sight; but I never exchanged a word with them, and they would think it the height of presumption if I professed to be an acquaintance of theirs. Mrs. Beverley answered my advertisement, and I was going to the Castle in the combined rôle of nursery governess to her younger children and companion to old Lady Trefusis. I was writing to break off the arrangement when you came in."

"Oh, Brenda," cried Kathleen Trefusis, impulsively, "how glad I am I got here before you posted your letter. Promise me you won't send it?"

The poor betrothed looked troubled at this demand. She was very fond of Katy—a month of daily intimacy at their age had been as great in its result as years of ceremonial visits later on—but still, with her wedding-day only two months distant, it would be a great sacrifice to go even for a short time to Castle Trefusis.

"I'm afraid the letter must be posted, Katy," she said, gravely. "You see, I have so much to do. I want to make a great deal of my trousseau myself, because it will save so much; and then Charley and I mean to go about and pick up furniture second-hand, because, you see, though his salary will be three hundred a year he hasn't saved much money for our start."

"You dear little housewife," cried Katy, kissing her, "I never dreamed of tearing you from 'Charley.' I wouldn't if I could! Brenda, don't you understand, I want you to let Mrs. Beverley go on believing you are coming next week as her governess and Lady Trefusis's companion, and when the time comes I mean to go in your stead!"

Brenda opened her eyes. Her thoughts travelled more slowly than her friend's.

"Surely dear," she suggested, "you would be happier at the Castle as a guest and a relation than as an inferior?"

"You aren't an inferior," said Katy, hotly.

"Read Mrs. Beverley's letters," returned Miss Yorke, "and you will see her opinion."

"I don't care one jot for her opinion."

"But if you dislike your relations so much, why go among them at all?"

Katy was silent for a few minutes, during which she read Mrs. Beverley's letters to Brenda.

"I can't explain it to you," she answered at last. "I am very angry with Sir Lionel and all of them for neglecting me so long. I hate being picked up suddenly for a caprice; but yet I am intensely curious about the family, and I should dearly like to go among them if only they did not know who I was."

"But Miss Johnson?"

"Miss Johnson has been told to send me to the Castle under proper escort. I see in one of Mrs. Beverley's letters she tells you she may require to place a young relation under your care for the journey to Yorkshire, so I think it will be easy to arrange that you should be the escort."

"But—"

"My dear, don't raise difficulties. Listen to my plan. Mrs. Beverley expects you one day next week. She promises in her last letter to send you word which day, and by which train you are to travel. All you have to do is to keep perfectly quiescent in the matter; but when you get that information post it to me."

"And you?"

"My dear child, like you, for the present I shall do nothing. I am going home now to

Minerva Lodge, and I shall tell dear Goody I give up the struggle, and am willing to go to my grandfather's. The next move comes from the Castle. Someone, probably my august aunt, will write to Goody, and say that the governess is travelling to Trefusis on such a day, and I can accompany her. An important appointment detains Goody at home, she sends Fraulein with me to the station. Naturally we do not meet you. Fraulein in despair puts me into the train. At the next station I bribe a porter to post two letters, one to Miss Johnson, saying I am well and happy but nothing will induce me to accept my grandfather's hospitality. She is to be quite easy, for I am going to live with a very respectable family. The other letter will be to Sir Lionel telling him I decline the honour of becoming his guest. These letters once posted, I shall travel peacefully to my destination, and enter on my duties at the Castle as Brenda Yorke."

"How wonderfully you have thought it all out; but Katy, I don't like it."

"Way not?"

"Isn't it—deceitful?"

"No," said Katy very firmly, because the same question had occurred to her. "I really can teach, Brenda, and Miss Johnson says I am a very amusing companion, so you see I shall be attempting any duties I can't perform. If I stayed at Minerva Lodge and refused to go to the Castle, I should make things very unpleasant for Goody. She has a great respect for my grandfather, and she would be torn in pieces between love for me and anxiety to please him. You will make me utterly miserable, Brenda, if you refuse."

"I will consent on one condition, dear. Three months will be quite sufficient for you to make acquaintance with your relations. I will not spoil your scheme if you promise me to leave the Castle for the Christmas holidays, and go straight back to Miss Johnson."

Perhaps Mrs. Beverley does not give Christmas holidays.

"Yes, she does. A month or five weeks. Do you agree, Katy?"

"I—I suppose so. I'm sure she's hateful, Brenda, just from her letters."

"They are very nice, straightforward letters," returned Brenda, "and forty pounds a year is a fair salary. I thought myself very lucky to get the situation."

"And now you have got a better one. Don't blush, dear, you know it's true."

"I hope you will soon be as happy as I am, Katy," said Brenda, with the prim complacency of a newly-engaged girl.

"Well, I don't think a fiancé would make me happy, but I don't see much chance of finding one at Trefusis Castle. Even if I were treated as an equal, they are not likely to be seeing much company so soon after Violet's death."

"It is six months ago now, and Mrs. Beverley has her grown-up daughters to think of."

"And her bereaved son! Brenda, if Kenneth Beverley is twenty-seven and poor Violet was turned twenty, why weren't they married before? If it had been 'settled' for years, surely they need not have waited."

"Miss Trefusis was always delicate," said Brenda, "and I fancy Mr. Beverley was not a very eager lover. You see, Katy, they had been brought up together, and I suspect they were very much like brother and sister."

"Then he won't be so very woe-begone. But," with a smile, "what does it matter? I'm not likely to see him. I shall probably be shut up in the school-room always."

"He does not live at the Castle. When he was appointed Sir Lionel's bailiff he moved to a very pretty house in the park, and he still keeps it on."

"Well, the Castle must be full enough without him," observed Katy. "Mrs. Beverley, her parents and her eight children, make a pretty big family party. Good-bye, Brenda dear. I can't stay to lunch. I know I should let out everything to Mrs. Henderson, and I

came off without leaving a word to tell Goody where I was going. She may be in fits about me."

Miss Johnson was too matter of fact for "fits," but she was much relieved at Katy's return, and still more so when her wilful favourite declared she had "thought over things," and she supposed her grandfather's invitation must be accepted.

Every act in the little drama went as Kathleen had desired. It seemed almost as though fate had played into her hands, for Mrs. Beverley fixed the very day on which Minerva Lodge reopened for the journey, and the train she named left King's Cross at the very hour when Miss Johnson had an appointment with the wife of an officer in India who wished herself to consign her darlings to the Lady Principal and give her personal directions as to their health.

"Fraulein will go with me," said Katy, sweetly. "She is used to travelling, and the noise of a railway station is just music to her."

"Your aunt does not describe her governess," said Miss Johnson, referring to the letter. "She only says Miss Yorke will be in the first-class waiting-room half-an-hour before the starting of the train, and that she has told her you will be holding a white handkerchief in your left hand."

"Very absurd," grumbled Katy. "She'd much better have asked you to sew a ticket on my breast with 'This is Sir Lionel's unwished-for grandchild.' I suppose if we miss the wonderful governess I had better come back here?"

"No," said Miss Johnson, thoughtfully. "In that case Fraulein had better put you into the ladies' carriage, and ask the guard to look after you. But why should you miss Miss Yorke? She is sure to be in time, and Fraulein is punctually itself."

And if punctuality meant being early, indeed she was. The train was timed to leave King's Cross for the north at twelve-thirty, and about an hour before that Katy and her duenna entered the first-class waiting-room, a grey-haired porter having been entrusted with the trunks and instructed to label them to Dinsdale, the nearest station to Trefusis Castle and about an hour's journey from York.

They waited, waited, and waited. Fraulein arranged the white handkerchief conspicuously in her pupil's left hand, and even insisted on her fluttering it gently whenever a fresh person, feminine, of course, entered, but it was of no avail.

The German even accosted one or two ladies and asked them if they were Miss Yorke. She might have spared her trouble: the real Miss Yorke was then at Whiteley's deep in the mysteries of her trousseau; the false one was at Fraulein's side.

Just as it only wanted ten minutes to the starting of the train the porter appeared. The trunks were in; a seat was reserved for the young lady, had she not better take possession of it?

Katy settled herself comfortably in a corner. Her last view of the platform showed her Fraulein still hunting about for Miss Yorke, and abusing that lady in no measured terms in the purest German.

Katy leant back with a smile on her lips. Her plan had succeeded perfectly. She had gained her wilful way; it remained to be proved whether she would not repent her escape.

CHAPTER III.

"You are my own son. My whole life has been one long sacrifice for you, but I think you take a positive delight in persecuting me and thwarting my slightest wish."

Here the Honourable Mrs. Beverley put a small lace-trimmed handkerchief to her eyes, shed a few invisible tears, and waited to see the result of this speech on the tall well-knit young

fellow who sat opposite her, playing with the ends of his moustache in the nervous irritation his mother had caused him.

Poor fellow! he ought to have been used to these outbreaks, for Hilda Beverley was a bitterly disappointed woman, and spared no one in her fits of rage.

Kenneth had seen very little of his mother till lately, for as soon as her father's death made Violet the heiress of Trefusis, Sir Lionel had sent for Kenneth, and for the last dozen years or more the Castle had been his chief home.

From school and college he always returned there for the holidays, and when at the age of twenty-four he became his grandfather's agent and removed nominally to the bailiff's house in the park, he still spent most of his days at the Castle, dining there nightly, as a matter of course, and often coming in time for the afternoon tea Violet Trefusis dispensed so gracefully.

He was fond of Violet, but not the least in love with her; and when the beautiful heiress confessed to him her heart had gone forth to another Kenneth felt more sorrow for his grandfather's disappointment, more anxiety for the storm which would break over Violet's head than personal grief.

His rival was poor, and had gone abroad to try and make a position, Violet told her cousin, and then she begged him for her sake to keep the secret, and let Sir Lionel still believe in their engagement.

"You never cared for me like that, K-n," whispered the girl; "and you are too noble to want a wife who does not love you. When once I am of age I will tell grandpapa all. I only beg you to keep silence till then."

Generous to a fault, her scheme was, when she was of age and mistress of her mother's fortune, to insist on at least half of it being settled on K-n. He never suspected that; he kept her secret loyally, and when she died, poor child, before her twenty-first birthday, and before she had told her love story to Sir Lionel, it was Kenneth's pen which wrote her last farewell to her distant lover.

For six months after Violet's death Kenneth was troubled by no plans for his matrimonial welfare; but, alas for his peace! Mrs. Beverley's lease of her London house expired soon after Violet's death. She offered—as a great sacrifice—to come with her children and try to cheer her parents in their grief for a while.

She had been at the Castle six months, and showed every intention of remaining there. At first she troubled nothing about Kenneth's future. All would be hers at her father's death, and of course, she should not wrong her firstborn.

K-n was not particularly grateful for these protestations, since he knew his mother would have no choice in the matter; but when Sir Lionel, after his fatal interview with Mr. Ashton, revealed the truth to his daughter, her rage knew no bounds.

She accused her father and Kenneth of plotting against her one moment, the next she called the young man her poor, injured boy and wept over him. For ten days she was hysterical; then the Baronet unfolded his brilliant scheme to her, and she was reconciled.

"Of course the girl will be a perfect little savage, but I can polish her up; and you might leave her here a great deal, and travel about *en garçon*. She can't do as much for you as poor dear Violet, but at least a marriage with her will assure your future; you will have the Castle and ten thousand a-year. And really, K-n, I hope you will make me a handsome allowance. Papa gives me a thousand a-year, and I find it none too much with all the children."

K-n found his voice at last.

"I hope my grandfather will live another twenty years," he said, earnestly, "and that he will give you all he can spare; but not even for the sake of continuing your allowance will I marry Kathleen Trefusis, the daughter of

your ne'er-do-well brother and of one of his own models."

Privately, Mrs. Beverley thought it a pity her father had spoken so disparagingly of Algonron and his wife. She tried to alter the impression he had given Kenneth.

"Algy was a dear fellow, only romantic and rather obstinate; and the girl had seen better days. I believe it was only poverty that reduced her to being an artist's model."

"My dear mother," said Ken, wearily, "I am not anxious to hear about them. I have no intention of marrying Miss Trefusis, even if you proved to me her mother had been a duke's daughter. I don't approve of a poor man marrying a rich woman at all; and when it's a woman who has only just become rich and is not to the manner born, it would be simple madness."

Mrs. Beverley opened her eyes in surprise.

"A girl like that need never even know she had the better right to Trefusis! You were willing enough to marry Violet, who was heiress to her mother's property as well."

"I don't think Vi would ever have taunted her husband with her money," replied Kenneth, gravely; "but we need not bring her name into the discussion, mother. When I first heard my Uncle Algonron had left a daughter who would take Trefusis, I was, I confess it, disappointed. I thought my grandfather should not have kept her existence a secret; but now I can understand that felt the subject too painful to talk of. Besides, till he saw Ashton the other day he did not realise that she was his heiress."

"And do you mean to sit down quietly and let her despoil you?"

"I mean to do my duty to the property as my grandfather's steward, and when ever death calls him hence I shall hope to find similar employment under some other landowner. I shall never be a rich man, but I trust always to be able to earn my bread."

And then Mrs. Beverley lost her temper, and made the kind, motherly speech with which the chapter opens; and Kenneth took advantage of the pause that followed to leave the room—and indeed the house, for Mrs. Beverley had pursued him to his own abode, Elm Cottage; scenes like this tried him and made him wonder whether the presence of his mother and her eight children added to the peace of Trefusis Castle.

In the park he met his grandfather. The old man loved Kenneth as the apple of his eye, and the affection was warmly returned. Linking his arm in his, the Baronet drew his grandson away from the public to a more secluded spot, and said anxiously,—

"She is coming to-day, K-n."

Poor Kenneth, he began to think the subject of Kathleen haunted him at every turn.

"Indeed, sir," he said, cheerfully, "I am sure I hope you will take to her. After all she is a Trefusis on one side, and good blood may tell in spite of her disadvantages."

Sir Lionel groaned.

"I left her with Susan Johnson because she'd been governess here for seven years, and I knew I could trust her to see the child had a plain, decent education; but a middle class school was not the right place for the heiress of Trefusis. I ought to have remembered only Violet's life stood between her cousin's and this place."

"Is Miss Trefusis travelling alone?" asked Kenneth, trying to keep the conversation to comfortable commonplace subjects. "Shall you go and meet her?"

"She is to come under the care of the governess your mother has engaged for the twins. Miss Yorke is to pick up Kathleen at King's-cross, they will be at Dinsdale at half-past six."

"A governess for the twins! Surely with three grown-up sisters such a thing wasn't necessary. My mother always declared she couldn't afford it."

"The little maids were handed about from one to the other of their sisters till they never knew what to expect," said Sir Lionel; "and

as your grandmother wants someone to read to her now and then, I told Hilda if she chose a governess who would be a kind of companion to my wife as well, the salary should be my affair."

Kenneth sighed. No one knew better than he how many of Mrs. Beverley's expenses were already Sir Lionel's "affairs." The old man caught the sigh, and looked up with a smile.

"My dear boy, what is there to trouble you? Hilda is the last of my children. I can't even save up a nice sum for her, so the least I can do is to give her what I can now. You see all these years I spent money lavishly on the estate, believing you and Vi would reap the benefit. There won't be much for anyone when I am gone."

"I think the girls ought to help themselves," said Kenneth, rather bluntly. "My mother has exactly three hundred a-year of her own. How can she expect to keep eight children in idleness?"

"Oh, come, I don't see that it's so bad as that. The girls will marry, they're pretty creatures. Alfred will get a curacy, and the younger boys are bright little fellows sure to get on. K-n, I want you to go to Dinsdale station and meet Kathleen."

"My mother would be the better person," said Mr. Beverley, rather shortly.

"No, she wouldn't. Hilda won't forgive the girl whom she considers usurps her rights. You are made of nobler stuff, my boy, and I can trust you to show courtesy and kindness to a stranger, even if it seems to you like deprecation to call her by Violet's name."

"Miss Trefusis!" K-n sighed as he spoke the familiar title. Never within his memory had it been applied to any creature but his cousin.

"Is my grandmother reconciled to her coming?"

"Perfectly. She always reproached herself that Algy's child was a stranger to us. She seems to think Kathleen may fill the void Violet's death has made in our hearts. Your sisters are clever girls, K-n, and stylish ones, but they are too fond of gaiety to care for old people like us. Then I may trust you to go to the station, K-n, and you'll come up to dinner afterwards. It'll be at eight at usual."

"How am I to know—my cousin?"

"Well, it is seldom half-a-dozen people get out at Dinsdale. Look out for two ladies, one older than the other. They're sure to be the only strangers there."

Kenneth dressed early, put on a light overcoat, and was ready when the brougham called at Elm Cottage.

It was a seven-miles drive from Trefusis to Dinsdale station, and even Sir Lionel's fleet grays generally took three quarters of an hour doing it.

K-n calculated if the train was punctual they would be at the Castle by a quarter past seven, time for all the introductions to be got over before the unknown cousin had to dress for dinner.

But the train was not punctual; it was so late that Kenneth began to fancy there must have been an accident before full twenty minutes after time it came creeping slowly into the little station.

If Sir Lionel had been there he would have proved the truth of his own words, for only three people alighted; two farmers well known to Mr. Beverley, and a young girl dressed in a soft grey travelling cloak and a small, close-fitting black hat.

He looked at the last passenger with perplexity. She was the only feminine arrival by this train. Could there have been a mistake? Had the governess failed to meet his unknown cousin? and in that case, which of the two was this tall, graceful dame, who was walking slowly to where the porter had flung some luggage out of the van?

He inclined to the belief this was neither of the pair he had come to meet. She looked far too young to be a governess, and far too graceful and dignified for his despised cousin;

and then an inspiration came to him, he would read the name on her luggage and so solve his doubts.

"Miss Yorke, passenger to Dinadale." Another moment and he was speaking to the stranger as courteously as though she had been an honoured guest instead of a poor little nursery governess.

"I think you are going to Trefusis Castle. My grandfather sent me to meet you. If you will let me take you to the carriage, the servant will see to your luggage; but first I should ask if Miss Trefusis did not meet you in London. We thought you would travel together."

The girl turned to him and answered with pleasant frankness—evidently, poor child! she had not yet learned to consider civility to a governess as a wonderful event.—

"Miss Trefusis was to have met me half-an-hour before the train started. I waited till the very last, the bell rang as I took my seat, but no one came. I hope," she added, timidly, "Mrs. Beverley will not think me remiss. You see, I did not know where Miss Trefusis lived, or I would have gone in search of her, and I thought it better not to miss the train as I knew Mrs. Beverley intended sending to meet it."

"I am sure you were quite right," said Kenneth, kindly. "No doubt there will be a letter in the morning to explain."

It was a long drive, and the new governess came back in her corner of the brougham as though the journey had tried her out; and Kenneth, seeing she was weary, ceased trying to make conversation for her, and left her in peace till, as they passed through the lodge gates, he said, gravely,—

"I think you will like my grandmother, Miss Yorke. She has lost all her children save my mother, and seen a great deal of other trouble, but she's always cheerful, and as a kind word for everyone."

"I hope she will like me," said the girl, timidly. "I shall try to please her."

"Were you ever in Yorkshire before?"

"I spent a month at Scarborough this summer; but I have lived in London ever since I can remember."

"Then your home is there?"

"I have no home," she answered, quietly; "I am an orphan, and alone in the world, Mrs. Beverley."

At that moment the carriage stopped under the grand entrance to the Castle. As he assisted Miss Yorke to alight, Kenneth felt the trembling of his hand he held, and hoped from the bottom of his heart that his mother would accord to the little governess a more gracious reception than he feared.

"My lady is in the drawing-room, sir," began the butler, but before he could finish his sentence Sir Lionel came into the hall.

Miss Yorke had got over her trembling now, and explained to him the cause of her arriving alone without a falter in the musical voice.

The old gentleman assured her it was no fault of hers. He had no doubt an explanation would arrive in the morning. Would she come and be introduced to his wife?

Kenneth pitied her, for he knew that at this hour the whole party would be gathered in the drawing-room—his three proud, grown-up sisters besides the twins. He wondered how Miss Yorke would get through the ordeal of their inspection, and followed quietly in her wake.

He was in time to see that Lady Trefusis shook hands with the new comer, a ceremony not vouchsafed by the other ladies, and called the twins to speak to their governess; then Mrs. Beverley broke in harshly.—

"You had better take the children to the school-room, Miss Yorke. Supper will be brought you there presently."

Lady Trefusis interposed.

"Ring the bell, Kenneth, please;" then to the servant who appeared, "Send my maid here, please." She kept the young stranger close to her until the faithful maid appeared,

and then gave Miss Yorke into her care, adding, gently, "I am not strong enough to walk much or I would show you the school-room myself. Now, children," to the twins, "midnight is very good to-night, for Miss Yorke looks tired."

There was an uncomfortable silence when the little party had left the room. Sir Lionel broke it by turning angrily to his daughter with,—

"While you are in my house, Hilda," with a slight stress on the pronoun, "please treat people with courtesy. Miss Yorke is a lady and your mother's companion, please remember—not a servant."

"She is absurdly young," retorted the widow, "and much too good-looking. I wish I had asked for her photograph before engaging her."

"I like young faces," said Lady Trefusis, "and I fancied, Hilda, she had a look of Violet."

"She ought to have waited for Kathleen," said Alice Beverley—Ken's eldest sister—rather sharply. "She had no business to come on without her."

"Her manners are much too independent," chimed in Maude; while Mary, the third of the grown-up sisters, added, tartly, "And she dresses much too grandly. Why, that travelling cloak is far handsomer than mine. I do hope mother will keep her in her proper place."

Lady Trefusis sighed. The grandchildren who remained to her were none of them, Kenneth excepted, very near her heart. She had brought up Hilda carefully, and tried to set her a good example. How was it that Mrs. Beverley had developed into a passionate, covetous, sharp-tongued woman, and her daughters seemed to have neither heart nor feeling?

Miss Yorke, of course, brokehearted in the school-room with her pupils, so she did not have the satisfaction of seeing the consternation which prevailed when her own letter reached the Castle, and was read by Sir Lionel to his wife and daughter.

Mrs. Beverley wrung her hands.

"My boy's future is ruined," she cried, wildly. "This wicked girl must be found at once and the marriage hurried on. I shall never know an hour's peace till she is Kenneth's wife."

"Don't be an idiot if you can help it, Hilda," said her father, bluntly. "It seems to me, Mary," turning to his wife, "after neglecting her for years our invitation was only an extra wrong to that poor child, since it has driven her from the shelter of a home where she was safe and sheltered into the wilderness of the great world."

"There is a proud ring about the letter that reminds me of my boy," said Lady Trefusis. "Lionel, I believe if we could find her we might be proud of Kathleen after all. I wish you would go to London and see Miss Johnson; she may be able to give you a clue to the poor child's whereabouts."

But though Sir Lionel went to London that very day, though the principal of Minerva Lodge mitigated her grief with his, she was powerless to help him.

She showed him Kathleen's letter to her, and tried to be cheerful over the statement she was "well and happy;" but she confessed to the Baronet her late pupil had no intimate friends, and had never been away from her even for a visit.

"She knows no more of the world than a baby," sobbed the much troubled spinster. "I only wish I had her here safe again."

"My letter had the postmark Grantham. Had she friends there?"

Miss Johnson shook her head.

"My note had the name, Grantham was the first place where the train stopped, and I expect Katy got out there and returned to London. She had plenty of money, for I gave her all that remained of my cheque—over ten pounds—thinking, till she began to

feel at home at Trefusis, she would not like to ask you to supply her."

Sir Lionel growled.

"You actually think that child is alone in London with only ten pounds between her and starvation?"

"Katy would not starve; she is a very quick, capable girl, and with no idea of romantic self-sacrifice. I am quite sure that if she were threatened with real hardships she would come back to me," said Miss Johnson, warmly.

She meant to praise her late charge, but her words gave Sir Lionel a completely wrong impression. They made him picture Katy as a strong, robust young woman, quite able to make her own way in the world without help. He quite forgot that she had first been described as "knowing no more of life than a baby," and had terrible visions of his helpless engaging herself as book-keeper to a butcher, and possibly marrying the foreman.

It really seemed to him the best thing he could do would be to offer a reward for Kathleen's recovery at once.

Fraulein, called in to confer with him, could not understand how they had missed his governess. Could there possibly be two waiting-rooms at King's Cross?

"Miss Yorke waited in the ladies' room," said Sir Lionel.

"And I told you to wait there too, Fraulein!" cried poor Miss Johnson, almost distracted, as her German teacher confessed to having taken Katy to the general waiting-room, and never even looked in any other.

"Oh! how could you be mistaken?"

Poor Fraulein expressed great regret. Miss Trefusis had told her the general waiting-room; the porter had conducted them there, she had concluded it was all right.

"Do not blame this lady," said Sir Lionel, gravely; "from her own letters it is clear she misguidedly had no intention of coming to Yorkshire. Even if she had met Miss Yorke at King's Cross, and commenced the journey with her, she could have found some way of leaving her en route." Then, as the German teacher thankfully made her escape, he added, sadly, "Is it our punishment for neglecting her all these long years; or is it the taint in her blood coming out?"

"There was no taint in her blood," said Miss Johnson, firmly. "Her father was the most tender-hearted of all your children; her mother was a simple, loving girl, who died at nineteen. I would risk a great deal, Sir Lionel, that if you only met Katy without knowing who she was, and so judged her without prejudice, you would think her charming!"

"Ugh!" grunted the old gentleman, "she doesn't seem inclined to give me the chance of meeting her. How am I to find her, that's the first question?"

"Keep quiet and wait," advised Miss Johnson. "You see, in my letter she promises to come back to me soon, 'before the year is ended.' Now, Sir Lionel, Katy never broke her word in her life. This is the nineteenth of September; before December is over my child will be here."

"And you would actually take her back?"

"And gladly! If you disavow her, and cease to provide even her expenses, she will be welcome here. I have saved money, Sir Lionel; and, besides, if I had only a crust to keep us both, Katy should have her share of it!"

A kind of mist came before the Baronet's eyes. This missing girl must have something good in her to have gained such love. He saw Miss Johnson meant just what she said.

Why had Hilda and her daughters so little heart, so little of human kindness in their nature? This school-mistress, who had been educated in an asylum, and had had, he knew, a hard fight with the world, had managed to keep her power of affection. Why did his own womenkind seem so destitute of it?

CHAPTER IV.

The picture gallery was one of the chief attractions of Trefusis Castle. Once a week it was opened to the public, but at all other times it was a favourite haunt of the twins on wet days.

Nowhere, to their mind, was such a perfect place for running races, playing hide-and-seek, and other kindred diversions; and as Lady Trefusis declared she liked them to be happy there Mrs. Beverley made no objection, and whenever it was too wet or cold to go out Miss Yorke and the children spent their play-time in the beautiful old gallery.

They were there one afternoon about six weeks after the arrival of the new governess, but a rather peremptory message had come for the children to go to their mother, and Miss Yorke, believing they would be back in a few minutes, sat on alone on the comfortable lounge, where they had all settled themselves to "ask riddles."

The girl, who was really Kathleen Trefusis, but who was known at the Castle as Brenda Yorke, had learned a great deal which nearly concerned herself since she came to Yorkshires. The twins, who loved her dearly, could not be cured of repeating their mother's confidences to their sisters, often carelessly made before them.

Old Lady Trefusis loved to talk to her companion of her lost grandchild, and the old housekeeper, who treated Miss Yorke with affectionate respect, was given to gossip about the family she had served so long.

So Kathleen knew why she had been invited to Trefusis Castle. She knew that she, and she alone, was the heiress of the beautiful old place.

Mrs. Beverley might slight her, the girls might be positively rude and unkind, they little guessed her identity, and that the moment the breath was out of Sir Lionel's body she would be mistress of Trefusis.

If she had come among them in her true character they would not have liked her any better, but they would have treated her differently, since they all desired her marriage with Kenneth.

Kenneth himself, the child thought, with a blush, alone would have been unchanged. Kind and courteous to the little governess, he would have been no more to Miss Trefusis, for his heart was buried in his cousin's grave.

Looking at the picture of Violet Trefusis, which hung just opposite, Katy found the tears welling up into her eyes. It was so strange, so hard that the girl who had loved, friends, wealth, and home should be taken, and she herself, a wail whom no one wanted, left.

"What is the matter, Miss Yorke?"

It was Kenneth's voice. He had been passing through the gallery, and stopped to admire the careless grace of the girl's pose, then he saw the tell tale tears and spoke.

"I believe I have got the blues," she said, quietly; "I was looking at that picture, and thinking what a pity it was she died when other people could have been spared so much more easily."

A conviction seized on Kenneth the poor child meant herself by "other people," but he did not say so. He took a seat beside her, and asked gravely,—

"Do you know her history?"

"Everyone knows it. She was Sir Lionel's idol. The very light of his eyes, and she was your promised wife. I ought not to have spoken of her to you. Lady Trefusis told me once you could never bear to speak of her!"

"Miss Yorke," said Ken, gently, "you and I are friends. I always feel I brought you to the Castle, and I would fain make you happy here if I could. I don't know what secret trouble you have, but I have often fancied it must be a heavy one. Perhaps you were envying Violet her early death?"

"I don't want to die."

"No; but you fancy you could be spared better than my cousin. You have wondered

why she was taken. I was very fond of Violet, but in the last few months I have often felt thankful she was taken."

"Mr. Beverley!"

"I have not told anyone," he said, simply, "but I can trust you. My grandfather thinks I do not like to talk of my cousin because my grief is too great. The truth is I am afraid to talk much of Violet lest I should betray the secret she entrusted to me. The world thought us betrothed lovers, but I knew that—her whole heart was another's. If she had lived till she was of age she would have told my grandfather the truth."

"But you were engaged."

"We had been nominally engaged for years. We had never thought of ourselves as lovers since she grew up. She told me the truth but she begged me to keep her secret. Aylmer was absent. I believe she feared Sir Lionel would write angrily to him."

"And that is why you are thankful she is taken?"

"Not quite. I wrote the news of her death to Vincent Aylmer; he had a diplomatic post in the Far East. The day of her funeral I read his marriage in the paper."

"Oh, no—it is too dreadful."

"It is true. At the very moment she drew her last breath, he was plighting his marriage troth to a Jewish heiress. If he had only waited, Violet had a fortune large enough for his cupidity, but I suppose he was in desperate straits for money; anyhow he was on his wedding-tour when he got my letter."

"How sorry you must have been you had written it."

"I don't know. I had promised her, you see. I only hope he'll never come back to England. I don't think I could take his hand in friendship."

Katy raised her eyes to the beautiful pictured face.

"She does not look strong enough to bear sorrow."

"No, it would have killed her."

"Mr. Aylmer ought to be ashamed of himself; first robbing you of her and then being false to her."

"He never robbed me of her," said Kenneth, abruptly. "I loved her dearly; but if he had been worthy of her, I could have listened to their wedding bells without a pang. She was like a sister to me. I fancied once we should have been happy together; but I know now the attachment I had for her was not the love a man should bear his wife."

He looked at Katy intently as he spoke, and to her annoyance she felt herself blush crimson. Kenneth sighed heavily and then continued,—

"Do you think a poor man has a right to fall in love, Miss Yorke?"

"As much right as a rich one," the girl said, simply, "or rather more. You see a rich man has so much else to fill his life, a poor man would want love more."

If she had been more worldly-wise she must have read the passionate love shining in his eyes as he looked at her, and have known that it was she who had taught him there was a more fervent attachment possible to him than that he had cherished for his cousin Violet.

"I am glad you told me about Mr. Aylmer," said the girl, suddenly looking up at the picture. "I used to pity her so much."

"There is some one I pity infinitely more—my cousin, Kathleen Trefusis."

If he had only known he was speaking to the true owner of the name. Katy felt intensely interested at the turn the conversation had taken, and replied,—

"Lady Trefusis has told me a great deal about her. I do not think she is dead. I expect you will hear of her soon."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Poor girl! Things would have been bad enough if she had come to us straight from school; but now she may be spending this time with utter vulgarities who are kind to her hoping to prey on her gratitude when she is mistress of Trefusis. Just fancy her filling

this old place with a crowd of people who hadn't an 'h' among them."

"Let us hope they will have a few," said Miss Yorke, demurely. "I wish your cousin were here, Mr. Beverley. Lady Trefusis is so gentle and high-bred, I think being much with her would refine anyone, and if she is very out of the might be sent to school again."

"Nonsense; she is old enough to be married, and she will be the richest prize in the county to fortune-hunters. Poor girl, I don't know which would be more dreadful. If she marries a counter-jumper she will be out by the county and feel utterly out of place here. If she accepts a penniless gentleman who is attracted by her money, they will lead a cat-and-dog life."

"Don't trouble about it yet," said Miss Yorke, gravely. "I don't fancy the Trefusises are a marrying family. Your cousin may escape both the fates you have conjured up."

"I hope not," he said, hurriedly. Then seeing her horrified face he explained, "Of course I don't want to see her miserable, but I should like her to marry some one as soon as possible. Don't you see, so long as she is Miss Trefusis my poor mother will never forget there is but one life between her and the Castle. No, I would rather see Kathleen married than that, even if her husband were a milkman."

"A very clean, healthy occupation," said Miss Yorke, quietly; "and of course he could retire."

"When are you coming to see my garden?" asked Beverley, suddenly; "I asked the twins to bring you weeks ago."

"But November is the wrong time of year for gardens," said Miss Yorke, "and Mrs. Beverley forbade the expedition."

"Oh!"

And he hoped privately his mother had at least forbidden it civilly.

"What made her do that?"

"I believe she thought the twins would take cold," said Miss Yorke, demurely.

"She always hated Elm Cottage. She wanted me to have the Dower House. It used once to be occupied by Violet's father; since that it has been let to an excellent tenant. It is ever so much too large for a bachelor."

"People's ideas differ so," replied the girl, lightly. "A friend of mine is to be married next week, and she told me she had taken quite a large house. When I came to the description I found it had just eight rooms."

Kenneth smiled.

"Love in a cottage."

"The love is there. I'm not sure about the cottage. She is to live at Grantleigh, and I shouldn't think there were any cottages in that smoky town."

"Are you going to the wedding?"

"Oh, no; I don't even know Mr. Hargrave at all, and London is so far."

Kenneth looked at her rather wistfully.

"Perhaps you think your friend might have 'done better' than an eight-roomed house in Grantleigh?"

"I'm sure I didn't dream of such a thing. They are ridiculously happy. She seems to think him the wisest of human creatures, and herself the luckiest girl in the world to be his choice. One couldn't laugh at them, you know, it was so real, but it made a kind of lump come into my throat as I listened. It seemed as though she—my friend—had got into a lovely world of her own where no one else could enter."

"The world of love," said Kenneth, very softly, "and I think the entry to that world a happier gift than a fortune."

"Miss Yorke," in a shrill, forbidding voice, "Miss Yorke, mother wants you downstairs at once. You are to take the fine embroidery you have been doing for her, and show it to Lady Baxford. It would have been better if you had been doing it now instead of flirting with my brother."

White as marble with indignant feeling, the governess vanished. Kenneth put one hand

on his sister's shoulder and forcibly detained her.

"Alice, I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself to insult a defenceless girl who cannot protect herself."

Alice held her ground.

"I daresay you are quite capable of defending her," she said, spitefully. "I am sure if Kathleen Trefusis ever hears of your carryings on with Miss Yorke she will never listen to you."

"You are talking nonsense, and spiteful, ill-bred nonsense, too," cried Kenneth, hotly. "You know perfectly that I have not the slightest intention of proposing to our cousin if she were found to-morrow."

Alice looked at him shrewdly.

"Our revered grandparents fancy you too broken hearted to have an eye for a pretty face," she said, sharply, "but I am not blind. I believe you are carrying on a desperate flirtation with little Miss Yorke, and I shall put mamma on her guard at once."

There was a terrible anger in his dark eyes as he answered her.—

"If I had a larger income or if only my present one were a certainty, I should propose to Brenda Yorke to-morrow."

"Then it is a mercy you are too poor to risk the perils of matrimony. We don't want another *misalliance* in the family. Uncle Algernon's was bad enough in all consciousness," was Miss Beverley's last taunt, as wrenching herself free from her brother's detaining hand, she swept past him on her way back to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER V., AND LAST.

ALICE BEVERLEY was as good as her word. That very day she told her mother she had seen Kenneth flirting with the little governess, and that the sooner they got rid of Miss Yorke the better.

Mrs. Beverley was perplexed and annoyed at the communication. Kenneth was of full age. She had not the slightest power to interfere with his choice, she was well aware, but she had made up her mind he should either marry money or remain single, so that all he could spare from his income might be at the disposal of his family. She did not like Miss Yorke because she was conscious the latter had become more to Sir Lionel and Lady Trefusis than her own daughters, but she did not feel able to send her away. Lady Trefusis was perfectly satisfied with Brenda, and was capable of retaining the girl entirely as her own companion, and leaving her daughter to find, and pay, another person as governess to the twins.

The scheming widow was fairly baffled, and she decided at last her only chance was to speak to the governess privately, and if possible taunt her into throwing up the situation. Sir Lionel and his wife could say nothing if Miss Yorke left at her own wish, and Hilda Beverley had seen enough of the girl's pride to guess it would not be difficult to work on it.

She succeeded beyond her hopes. She first hinted that Brenda was worming herself into Sir Lionel's favour to the detriment of his own grandchildren, and then she accused her of laying traps to entangle Kenneth. She did not have to speak twice; the governess turned to her with flashing, indignant eyes.

"I shall leave here to-morrow," she said, with cold, deliberate meaning, "and I will never enter this house again unless I come as an invited guest. Your son is perfectly safe, Mrs. Beverley. Your cruel taunts are an unworthy of him as they are insulting to me!"

She told Lady Trefusis in the morning she wanted to go away. A letter (from the true Brenda) received by the first post, only the second she had ever had since she came, supplied her with the colour of an excuse. She told her employer very simply that she

was urgently wanted in London. She was sorry to leave the Castle abruptly, but she had no choice. Would Lady Trefusis be kind and let her go?

"But you will come back?" said the old lady, anxiously. "Sir Lionel and I shall miss you terribly."

"You have been very kind to me," said the girl, sweetly. "I shall never forget how good you both have been."

When Kenneth dropped in that day to afternoon tea as usual, one of his sisters presided at the Sutherland table, and he looked in vain for the little governess.

"Where is Miss Yorke?" he asked one of the twins in a whisper, under cover of rather a warm argument between his mother and Alice.

"She went away this morning," replied the little girl. "Granny says her friends in London wanted her; but I think mother sent her. Mother came up last night and talked for ever so long after we were in bed, and when she was gone Miss Yorke sat down and cried. We both heard her."

Kenneth's face grew pale with anger. He followed Mrs. Beverley when she left the drawing-room to dress for dinner, and drew her into his grandfather's study, saying he wished to speak to her.

"What have you done with Miss Yorke?" he asked, passionately, when he had shut the door, and placed himself so as to cut off her retreat.

"Is that the way to speak to your mother?" demanded Mrs. Beverley.

"I mean to have an answer," he said, resolutely. "Yesterday Miss Yorke was an honoured inmate of the Castle with—I could swear—no intention of leaving us. To-day she has mysteriously disappeared, and was seen in tears after a conversation with you last night."

"I am not answerable to you," returned his mother. "The girl was a designing minx, and we are well rid of her!"

"Take care. You are speaking of the one woman in the world I wish to make my wife. Either give me Miss Yorke's address, mother, or I shall go to my grandfather and tell him your part in her disappearance!"

"I do not know her address," and something in her voice made Kenneth believe she was speaking the truth; but he passed from her with a frown, and went in search of Sir Lionel.

To him Ken told everything. The secret of Violet's love for Mr. Aylmer, and of how he had been in her confidence, and then his own deep affection for Brenda Yorke, and his mother's consequent interference.

"I never expect to be a rich man," he said, simply; "but I should be a happier one with a wife I loved and revered. Only two things kept me from telling Miss Yorke of my wishes. I felt you might think me faithless to Violet's memory, and deprive me of my present post; and knowing, poor child, she was homeless, I dared not deprive her of the shelter of your roof until I had a home ready for her."

"And so you never loved poor Violet, nor she you?" said Sir Lionel, sadly. "How blind I have been. Kenneth, don't ask me to receive that fellow Aylmer if he comes back to England. It would choke me to speak civilly to him."

"I should feel inclined to knock him down," said Kenneth.

"And you want to marry little Miss Yorke? Well, my boy, I can't do much to help you in a pecuniary way, but that child is a living sunbeam, and I shall be glad to feel you have such a bright presence in your house. I wanted you to marry Kathleen Trefusis, but you are old enough to know your own mind, and if you prefer love to money, I won't hinder you."

"But where is she? My mother declares she does not know her address."

"I told Miss Yorke she must let me know where to write to her, and she told me she

was going first to a friend's house in Greville-road, Maida-vale, No. 89, she said. I remember the address particularly, because Miss Johnson's school, Minerva Lodge, is in that same road."

"And I may tell Brenda you will welcome her as my wife."

"You shall have my blessing," said the old man, simply. "I am afraid it is little else I shall have to give you, but I don't think the child is of the stuff to value money above aught else."

At the very moment Kenneth and his grandfather were talking of her, a little penitent figure was seated on a low stool at Miss Johnson's feet, and Brenda Yorke *alias* Katy Trefusis, was telling the story of her six weeks' absence.

"Whatever made you do it?" asked the schoolmistress, anxiously. "Oh, my dear, if you knew how troubled I have been."

"Well," said Katy, nestling close up to her kind old friend, and feeling very thankful her masquerade was over, "you know I wanted to find out what they were like, and whether they were nice to other people though they had been so horrid to me."

"And what did you decide?"

"I think Sir Lionel and his wife are charming, but I can't bear Mrs. Beverley. I wish she weren't my aunt. Goody, I think she is horrid."

"She never had much heart," said Susan Johnson, thoughtfully. "And now, Katy, of course you will let me write and tell Sir Lionel I have found his grandchild?"

"Well, I rather fancy he may come here," said Katy, smiling, "without your writing. He told me he should be in London next week and would call and see me. I couldn't refuse him an address, and so I said he would find me at 89, Greville-road. You know, Goody, though we always call this house Minerva Lodge, as it stands between 88 and 90, 89 must be its correct style."

"And when he comes?"

"When he comes," said Wilful Katy, "it may strike him as strange Miss Yorke should be staying with you, and it is just possible he may guess everything."

"And if not?"

"If not," very demurely, "I suppose either you or I must tell him."

Miss Johnson was not a person to be taken unawares. The next morning she informed her servants all letters for "Miss Yorke" were to be taken in, and if any visitors inquired for that young lady, they were to be shown into the drawing-room, and their names brought to her. The impression given to the domestic staff was that Miss Yorke was a new pupil daily expected.

"He won't be here till next week," said Katy. "He may not come at all. A wealthy baronet would soon forget a poor little nursery governess."

But that very evening, as the principal and Katy sat at tea in Miss Johnson's private sanctum, the demure parlour maid appeared.

"The gentleman's come, ma'am. He wouldn't give any name, but he wants to see Miss Yorke."

The schoolmistress looked at Katy.

"I will go," said the girl, slowly; "but I can't understand it. I only left the Castle yesterday. Can he have guessed?"

It was not the Baronet who sat waiting for her in the pleasant lamp lit drawing room. A mist seem to rise before Katy, and almost blind her as she realised her visitor was not Sir Lionel, but his grandson.

Kenneth took both her hands in his.

"My grandfather told me where to find you; and I have come to ask you to be my wife. I have loved you ever since I first saw you at Dinsdale station, only I dared not tell you of my love while you were under my grandfather's roof; for I felt that if you refused me I might have robbed you of your home. I know all," he said, brokenly, "and the cruel part my mother and sister played;

but, believe me, if you can only care for me and will be my wife, I will guard you from every unkind word. My grandfather told me to tell you he would welcome you gladly, and that though he could do little for us in the way of money, an old man's love and blessing were waiting for you."

"But," there was a strange trembling of her lips from utter nervousness, "but, Kathleen Trefusis?"

"I have come to a strange conclusion about my cousin," said Kenneth, gravely. "I believe that by some chance she discovered my grandfather's plans for her to marry me. Depend upon it, my dear one, when you are my wife, and Kathleen knows she is safe from all designs of mine, we shall hear something of her."

"And are you quite sure," demanded Katy, "that you want me—because all the Trefusis family are proud, and I am a nobody?"

"You shall not disparage yourself," he said, fondly; "you are the one wife in the world for me."

"My father was a Bohemian, my mother worked for her bread, and I was brought up on charity: that is a history you will hardly care to own as your wife's."

"I am not listening," said Kenneth, firmly. "Nothing you may say can make any difference to my wishes, unless you tell me you can't possibly learn to love me."

And as she could not tell him that, it came about that when Miss Johnson, after an hour's delay, came in search of Katy, she found the visitor was not Sir Lionel, but a tall young man, who had one arm round the girl's waist, and his dark head strangely close to her sunny one.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the bewildered spinster. "Katy! what does this mean? Where is your grandfather?"

Explanations are proverbially tiresome things, but the one which presently ensued was perfectly satisfactory, save that Kenneth would fain have given his bride a fortune instead of owing one to her.

That Sir Lionel and Lady Trefusis were delighted, and the twins in ecstasies, goes as a matter of course.

Mrs. Beverley and her daughters felt thoroughly subdued; and as even their self-assurance was not equal to meeting the girl they had so cruelly slighted, in her new character of Kenneth's fiancée, they decided change of air was imperative for them, and that they were not strong enough for a Yorkshire winter; so that they had set off for Bournemouth before, amid the blazing of bonfires and the pealing of church bells, Kenneth Beverley-Trefusis, he had assumed the last name just before his wedding at his grandfather's wish, brought home his bride.

Mr. and Mrs. Trefusis reside chiefly at the Castle with Sir Lionel.

The Beverleys, who still enjoy an allowance of a thousand a year from the Baronet, pitch their tent in London, where the widow works hard to secure husbands for her dear girls.

She has never forgiven her daughter-in-law for her harmless plot; and though she is delighted Kenneth will some day be master of the Castle, and though she fully intends when that time comes to make him continue her present allowance, yet such is the narrowness of her disposition and tenacity of her prejudice, she would still prefer that he had married any other heiress in the world rather than WILFUL KATY.

[THE END.]

Of the large number of the orders of knighthood in Europe several are exclusively female. Some are of old or peculiar foundation, but are spoken of as still existing. That of the Bee, in France, established in 1703, would suitably honour female industry, that of Neighbourly Love, in Austria, dating from 1708 commends an excellent virtue.

A QUEER TRADE.

ANYONE who wishes to see a "hot-water shop" must seek it in the neighbourhood of Petticoat lane and Houndsditch. They abound in this neighbourhood and in other places where poor Jews congregate.

Of course it is well known that Jews on their Sabbath—which lasts from Friday evening to Saturday night—must not handle, ignite, or blow out any light; they must not light their fires, nor supply them with fuel when necessary; nor place on their fires any kettle, pot or other utensil, or remove them. This strange feature of their religion has brought into existence the so called hot-water shops. These are places where the poor Jew may on Saturday obtain hot water, which he would otherwise have to dispense with, on account of his not being able to have a fire on that day. The present writer, being out of work at the time was offered the management of one of these curious establishments.

The outfit and furniture of a hot-water shop are very simple. They consist chiefly of a large fire, some boilers, holding perhaps twenty gallons of water, and a hose-pipe attached to the main for the purpose of replenishing the boilers. Work commences at about 7.30 A.M. The boilers are steaming and the fires glowing, and the Christian representatives of their Jewish employers begin to arrive, and the jug or pail is held out for the water. Many bring their tea or coffee pots and brew their morning beverage on the spot.

One halfpenny is charged for each vessel, be it pail or teapot, and for one penny halfpenny or twopence a family can get all the hot water they require on Saturday. A small teapot is filled for one farthing.

A PENGUIN CITY.

DURING our recent cruise, writes a Falkland Island correspondent, we went ashore on a sequestered island, to view what the captain called a "penguin city." Sure enough, the whole island, comprising perhaps fifty acres, was laid off in regular squares, by streets running at right angles, the lines straight and true as a surveyor could have drawn them. As is well known, penguins spend their lives on the water except during the breeding season, when they are obliged to seek the shore. You will hardly believe me, but it is nevertheless true, that the birds not only lay out their city in blocks, but pick up all the loose stones, till the whole place is as smooth as a board floor. Then they take possession in couples, each pair selecting a home site—not to build a nest, but merely to pre-empt a particular spot on the bare ground.

The hen lays one egg, and only one, and during the time of incubation the male bird brings her food from the sea, or sits on the egg awhile himself if she wants to go out and take a swim. But in this case, as in many others, virtue is not "its own exceeding great reward," because the lady penguins grow so fat and sleek under the good care of their faithful husbands, that they are the more eagerly hunted at that particular season. The old birds are too tough and fishy to be relished by man or beast, but the tender young matrons are in great demand, both for their oil and flesh. Even the eggs have an oily and fishy flavour, and taste as hens' eggs might if cooked in kerosene.

The penguin is by no means a handsome or graceful creature. He has wings, like any other bird, but they are altogether too short to fly with, though they may assist him somewhat in waddling over the ground. When in the water he has no use for wings, because his broad feet, webbed like those of a duck, propel him rapidly. There are several varieties of them, the largest called the "Emperor Penguin," weighing from twenty five to forty pounds. It is funny to see a colony of these ungainly birds marching up and down their streets like soldiers, all the time standing erect and maintaining an air of great dignity and importance.

PRETTY PENELOPE.

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. ROCHDALE'S well-thought out plans for her niece's future met with what she justly considered the most unmerited failure and disappointment.

Penelope received her aunt very cordially, and accepted her affectionate advances without *arrière pensée*, although Mrs. Rochdale's love appeared to have had a tremendous stimulant in the news of the fortune that had come to her niece.

"But my dear Penelope!" she said, as she sat in the dark study and looked at her niece standing by the fire, a graceful figure in her black gown, her lovely face grown more lovely than ever; "but my dear Penelope!" she remonstrated. It was all she could find to say.

She had never anticipated the smallest difficulty with Penelope. It had seemed to her wisdom there could be no two questions about the matter.

Penelope, with her appearance and her money, must, of course, take her place in society, and with whom could she take that place so well or so desirably, in every sense of the word, as with her maternal aunt.

Starting under Mrs. Rochdale's care and guidance, having the entrée to the very smartest set, possessing such more than satisfactory attributes as wealth and beauty, it would be well-nigh impossible for Penelope to do anything but achieve success in the most comprehensive sense of the word.

Mrs. Rochdale had allowed herself to be both excited, interested, and soothed by the thought of the future, immediate, and otherwise, which spread before her the instant she heard of Penelope's good fortune.

Life would have a new zest under these changed circumstances. The glory and satisfaction that had accompanied Marcia's marriage had had time to fade by now; and, indeed, Mrs. Rochdale was conscious of a sense of peevish discontent when she dwelt on the subject of her daughter.

Marcia had not given her mother much attention since she had become Mrs. Latimer. She had never been a demonstrative, or even a sympathetic companion; but Mrs. Rochdale had not fathomed to the full the mean limits and nature of her child's heart until after Marcia had become independent of her.

The quarrels, the unhappy atmosphere that pervaded the domestic life at Latimer Court, was a source of real trouble to Penelope's aunt.

She was not a very noble character, as has been told before, she was frivolous, scheming, selfish, *une vraie mondaine*; but there ran in her veins some of the same blood as had lived in her gentle sister, Marion Desborough, and with all her faults Mrs. Rochdale had a few good points, which made her immeasurably better than her daughter.

There was, too, a plebeian touch about Marcia, coming from her father's side, which showed itself in actions and words that never would have escaped her mother.

Mrs. Rochdale had never experienced real disappointment over Marcia, and her brilliant marriage had been nothing less than a triumph when it occurred.

It was the knowledge of its absolute failure, none less for being unknown, that had given Mrs. Rochdale such unpleasant moments through the past year, and that made her heart thrill with a flash of pleasure when she pictured a future with Penelope under her care.

Although Marcia was her own child, and dearer to her than most people would have believed, Julia Rochdale was too clever, too keen, and had too much knowledge of true pride not to realise that Penelope would never, never develop into the sort of woman who now reigned at Latimer Court.

The remembrance of Penelope's almost indescribable love and devotion to her mother had a sweetness to her worldly aunt which was, perhaps, hardly confessed to herself.

Be that as it might, it must be said that Mrs. Rochedale had an honest pleasure in the thought of having her niece under her care, although it also must be said that it is very doubtful whether she would have paid Penelope such a visit as she was now paying, or laid before her a series of plans for immediate and future action, if she had not become aware of the fortune which Hartwick Desborough had left behind him.

It was, therefore, with un concealed dismay and disappointment that Mrs. Rochedale found that Penelope had not the faintest intention of following her plans or falling in with her wishes.

Penelope, in fact, having already a distinct plan and several wishes of her own; which, she stated quietly though firmly to her aunt, would be carried into action as soon as possible.

Mrs. Rochedale had turned her well darkened eyes on her niece.

"But, my dear Penelope," she said, "what you intend to do is so foolish—so very impossible!"

"I don't see the impossibility, Aunt Julia," said Penelope. "In fact, everything seems to shape very easily, much more so than I expected. See, here is the letter I had this morning from Mr. Blackstone, who has the management of all poor Uncle Hartwick's affairs. You will see that he says Thicket Croft can be ready for me in a week. The place has been empty for a long time; in fact, I believe the last tenants left it nearly a year ago, but it is in good repair and sounds very comfortable!"

Mrs. Rochedale's disappointment grew more decided at the sound of determination that rang out in each tone of Penelope's clear voice.

"But, my dear child," she expostulated, "this is all very well, but really, don't you see yourself that such a life is not the life for a young girl with—with such possibilities as you have before you? Of course I never thought you would hesitate to make your home with me. If Lucie were in England it would be another matter, but now that Walter has accepted this judgeship in India the question of your sister as a chaperone is finally settled. You cannot live alone, Penelope, you know. Why not? Oh! my dear, you really cannot be in earnest. It is so preposterous—so—so—"

Mrs. Rochedale actually failed to find a suitable word.

Penelope smiled faintly.

"If I were about to start housekeeping in London or in any fashionable town, I grant you it would be impossible, Aunt Julia; but in the country—"

Mrs. Rochedale broke in hurriedly.

"There is absolutely no difference—none whatever. Town or country, a girl like you, young with your appearance, cannot live by herself!"

"I shall not be by myself. I shall have a house full of women servants and a house-keeper who has known me all my life; my uncle's old butler Downs will go with me, and—"

"Of course, if you like to make fun of me and despise my offer, Penelope!"

Penelope hastened to soothe her aunt's ruffled spirit. She was not impressed by the visit as Mrs. Rochedale had imagined she would have been, but all the same her quick sympathy sorted out the good from the worldly motives, and, as a natural sequence, Penelope was as quick to acknowledge this good.

"I do not despise your offer, dear Aunt Julia," she answered, "nor am I making fun of you. I am grateful to you for your thought of me; and only sorry I must give you disappointment. I have no wish to make a start in the world. I should not be happy in London, Aunt Julia. I have always lived in

the country, even in Paris I lived beyond the city. I am a country mouse, and I shall only be happy in the country. Now, starting with that, don't you see how easily things fall into their place? Part of my property is in land, and Thicket Croft is the very ideal of a home for me!"

"But to live there alone—to bury yourself in the depths of a desert! Penelope, you must think of your future. It is all very well having beauty and a fortune, but how do you expect you will ever find a husband if you shut yourself up in this fashion?"

Penelope flushed suddenly crimson.

"I shall never, never marry!" she said, in a quick, low voice; then before her aunt could speak she turned and took a photograph from the mantelshelf beside her.

"Look, here is a picture of Thicket Croft. Is it not a pretty place, Aunt Julia? You will endorse that opinion, I am sure, when you come down and stay with me, as I hope you will do very, very often. I went down for my first inspection yesterday with Mr. Blackstone, and I was charmed with my property."

Mrs. Rochedale put up her gold eye-glasses, but before she looked at the photograph she gave one shrewd, sharp glance at her niece's face, on which the flush still lingered. The sight of that face gave a thrill of satisfaction to her ruffled spirit.

"Ah! I thought there was something below the surface," she said to herself. "Never, never marry! Who is it, I wonder? Someone she met in Paris—a flirtation on his part taken in all seriousness by her. How strange I never had an inkling of this before. It certainly puts a different complexion on things. For all her gentleness and sweetness Penelope is a strong-willed young person, and life would have been something of a trial with this spectre of an unhappy love always in the foreground. There is nothing so disheartening and tiresome as a girl with a sentimental sorrow; and Penelope has got it pretty deeply, I can see. She is not the ordinary young miss who falls in love a dozen times a month! Perhaps, after all, it will be a wise plan to let her have her own way without any more fuss!"

All this passed fleetly through Mrs. Rochedale's active brain, while she glanced at the photograph in her hand.

"It certainly looks well in a picture," she said, not seeming or allowing Penelope to guess that she had remarked anything strange in the anti-matrimonial statement the girl had made, or in the flush that had accompanied this statement, "almost a mansion—you will feel like a queen down there, Penelope."

Penelope was delighted to find her aunt beginning to accept the situation.

"I mean to be comfortable at all events," she answered, with a smile and a sigh. "I only regret so much," she added, wistfully, "that poor uncle Hartwick did not live to go there with me. It was a plan we had discussed all last year, and he had looked forward to it so much! We should have been so happy."

Mrs. Rochedale shut her eye glass with half a smile at the speaker.

"I believe you really were fond of that extraordinary old person, Penelope."

Penelope answered immediately.

"I was more than fond—I loved him!" she said, with a touch of truth in face and voice.

"Well, he certainly has redeemed himself in my eyes since his death," confessed Mrs. Rochedale. And then she fell to discussing all Penelope's plans.

"I wonder you are not a little alarmed at taking the responsibility of such a big establishment on your shoulders," she said when Penelope had given her a few more details.

"I am a born manager," she girl said, lightly, "and I mean to found quite an old-fashioned country house. I shall have hawthorn and yule logs, and all the traditional

things; and then think, Aunt Julia, what a nice arrangement it will be for Lucie when she comes home on the occasional visits she speaks of. I have already written out to her and told her to regard Thicket Croft as a nursery for all her babies as they come!"

Mrs. Rochedale rose to go. Disappointed as she was, she began to feel that Penelope would have been a very difficult and anxious case had things gone as she desired.

"You will hunt, I suppose?" she said. "Why not let Denis get your horses? He is in town now, I believe, at least I know he said something about coming to Tattersall's."

Penelope put a gigantic constraint on herself.

"Oh! I will not trouble Denis. I have engaged old John Fellows, you won't remember him, of course, from Stevenstone as my head groom, and he will look after everything."

"You are a most independent young woman, Miss Penelope!" Mrs. Rochedale said with a laugh, "but no doubt you are right after all. The main thing, my dear child, is to be happy if you can, and I am sure I wish you that good fortune with all my heart."

It was not until Mrs. Rochedale was just going that Penelope mentioned Marcia.

"I hope she is stronger," she said, gently and earnestly. "Indeed there was nothing but pity in Penelope's heart for her cousin, for she knew that Marcia could never be absolutely happy; even had Denis loved her with all the strength and vigour of his love, Marcia's nature would have turned the love aside, and brought her misery in some form or other."

Mrs. Rochedale's face clouded at mention of her daughter.

"She is much better, and would be quite well, only she suffers from such terrible depression of spirits. Of course she is grieving over the poor little baby, as we all do; but sitting moping in a corner all day will do her no good, and will not bring the baby back to her. I wish she would rouse herself for Denis's sake. Young wives should remember the heat of husbands are but mortal, and if the home is not made bright and happy, why—"

and then Mrs. Rochedale broke off this sententious strain, and her voice was more earnest than Penelope had ever heard it before.

"Penelope," she said, "I will confess to you I am troubled about Marcia. I feel there is something wrong somewhere. Marcia was always an odd temper, and what one might call a little difficult, and I am so afraid sometimes she is not—not quite wise with Denis. I can say nothing however, for Marcia's most intolerant of any interference, yet I feel a few judicious words might put things right. She has some mistaken ideas about Denis, my dear. He is an angel to her. Of course this is all in confidence, Penelope; but I am sure you will sympathize with all I feel, do you not?"

Penelope bowed her head.

How each word stabbed her to the heart—this continually recurring story of the misery that was his daily, hourly portion! Out of a surety Penelope felt the burden of regret and remorse grow almost too heavy to be borne. She was unjust to herself really in the matter of Denis, for, after all, though she had wilfully set his love on one side by disappointment and disillusionment, she certainly had not driven him into his marriage with Marcia. It had been a series of mistakes, arising no doubt from her girlish recklessness and folly, but, after all, Denis had been no boy, and the big, terrible mistake he had made in the question of his marriage rested on his shoulders and his alone.

Penelope's tender love and grief for him however would not let this be. The blame of all his unhappiness she accepted, and for whatever evils lay before him in the future she held herself responsible.

Mrs. Rochedale, of course, could not possibly follow the bent of her niece's thoughts as she

stood silent before her; but something in the sweet gravity of Penelope's young beauty touched her in her highest part.

"Perhaps, if Marcia had some nice woman friend in whom she could confide and find sympathy and good counsel, things would soon mend; but, you know, Marcia never made any warm friendships. I think, however, she really likes you, Penelope, and it—"

"Oh! it would be impossible!" broke from Penelope, quickly. "I mean," she said, drawing her breath sharply, and speaking hurriedly to explain her words, "I mean, Aunt Julia, that I have literally no power of such a sort. Please don't think me unkind or wrong when I say I fear Marcia does not care for me very much." Penelope was thinking of the days she had spent in London, on that bygone visit. Of Marcia's developed hatred and jealousy she had no suspicion—never imagining for one single instant that the history of that brief, unspoken love was known to any other soul save Denis and herself. "Marcia considers me a little girl, and would, I am certain, resent anything I said very strongly. I—would rather not interfere," she finished, not very distinctly.

Mrs. Rochdale sighed.

"I did not mean you to interfere. I meant only that you should give Marcia a little advice, a few hints; but perhaps you are right. I hope I am only over-anxious. I can't help worrying about the matter just a little bit—that is only natural. Well, Penelope, I must run away now; I am glad to have seen you, although I must say I am not quite pleased with you. I don't approve of this scheme of burying yourself in the country for the rest of your natural life; but, after all, you are not a fool, and no doubt you would not do this if you did not want to do it. I hope all will go as well as you expect; I shall come and pay you an early visit, and I shall be very glad to assume the rôle of chaperone on any occasion when you think you may require one."

With that, Mrs. Rochdale kissed her niece with real affection, and drove away from the dingy old house in her smart carriage.

Penelope sat lost in painful thought long after her aunt's departure. The vision of Denis's uncomfortable home was never absent from her mind's eye.

Somehow, with all her fine, handsome appearance, Penelope had never been quite able to associate her cousin with the dignity of mistress of Latimer Court.

Marcia was shrewd, and passed with a certain brilliancy in the world; but to Penelope's delicate refinement there had always been a something about Marcia that had never been convincing, and to imagine such a woman as a sovereign in that old-world home was an incongruity—if not an impossibility.

All this, however, though it might vaguely hurt her sense of artistic fitness, would have been in a way a trouble.

Maybe another woman chosen out of Marcia's set, and of her calibre, would have failed to fit her position in the way she did.

It was the remembrance of Marcia's nature, her mean, narrow mind, her selfish heart, her suspicious, doubting self that appalled Penelope when she put facts straight in front of her, and realized that it was to this character, with this nature, Denis Latimer had allied himself, and with whom he had to pass the rest of his life.

Denis was young, and so was Marcia. A long vista of years stretched before them in the most natural course of events; out of that period of adjourning together only one year was passed, and yet what a pitiful history was inscribed already on the annals of their life. If things at the very beginning had gone so badly, what would be the end?

This was the thought shaping itself into a fear that lived with Penelope night and day.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE arrival of Penelope Desborough at the old-fashioned country house bequeathed to her by her uncle was, as may be supposed, a subject for much comment, chatter, and speculation in the neighbourhood around. The intelligence that Miss Desborough was very young, extremely pretty, and slightly unconventional, was not long in making its way about. Matrons and old heads were a little dubious at first. It was really a very strange arrangement, they opined, a young girl living alone in a big house like Thicket Croft, going her way in the most independent fashion, conducting her house and establishment as easily and as successfully as though she had had half-a-dozen chaperones and as many brothers to advise and assist her.

Several of these perplexed individuals paused before committing themselves by calling on the girl-mistress of Thicket Croft; but their troubled minds were at once set at rest when it became known that old Lady Susan Verschoyle had actually braved the dangers of the east wind to drive a couple of miles to drink tea with Miss Desborough in her cosy hall.

Lady Susan was the social barometer of the shire, and what she did, so did all the rest of the world around and about her country seat.

Penelope's position was at once assured, although the girl had not troubled herself in the very least about her neighbours or about their possible opinion or non-opinion.

She was very busy on the afternoon of Lady Susan's visit. A whole van load of rugs and curtains and draperies had arrived from Liberty's, and some of the other big London shops; and swathed in a brown holland apron, her pretty feet planted firmly on the top of some steps, her hammer working away like magic, while Kate and Downs below quarrelled fiercely in whispers when they were not giving their attention to their mistress, Penelope was sorely in the smartest trim when her housekeeper, who was her faithful Kate's mother, announced the arrival of her first guest.

She received Lady Susan with a blush and an excuse, but her visitor had fallen in love with her at once.

"I was told I should find a most charming little creature," she said, by-and-by, when tea had been brought, "and I was quite prepared to be pleased for I have a lively recollection of your mother, Miss Desborough, and I remember I thought her one of the sweetest women I had ever met!"

Any word of her mother touched the most vital part of Penelope's heart.

"I think, I remember, I have heard her speak of you, Lady Susan," she said, her lips trembling a little, for time had not yet cured her grief. "You used to stay at Latimer Court, did you not?"

Lady Susan assented.

"Paul Latimer was my nephew. I am Denis's great aunt, and I have a very strong affection for him. I have seen very little of him of late years, owing to my many years of residence abroad. My poor husband could not stand the English climate, and we were compelled to live in search of perpetual sunshine; so, you see, to a certain extent the Latimers and myself drifted apart; but I was deeply attached to both Paul and his wife; and, as a boy, I think Denis was the dearest little chap in the world."

Penelope bent her head over the tea cups and said nothing. She was trembling a little from the effect of Lady Susan's words. She knew now how the warmth of Denis's love for her had found a vent, had discovered a means of doing something to please her and to benefit her; for Penelope had learnt through Mrs. Rochdale that Lady Susan was the one important person in the shire, and knew the value such a friendship must mean for her. She would have been attracted to her visitor

under any circumstances, for Lady Susan was just the sweet, refined gentlewoman that appealed most to the girl's admiration; but coming, as she did, with the influence of Denis's thoughts about her, Penelope felt almost a love for the silver-haired old lady.

They talked a long while, and chiefly about Penelope's plans for her house and for her future life.

"You are young to be alone, my child," Lady Susan said; but she did not speak reprovingly. "You must learn to run over to me now and then. I am sorry to say I cannot always venture out in these early spring days, but we are not far apart, and in a trap or on horseback—"

"I am afraid I shall be a nuisance, I shall come so often!" Penelope said, with a smile, and yet with a moisture in her wonderful blue eyes.

"You will always be welcome, my dear," was the gentle, earnest reply, "and then you must make use of me. I know a little about the people around here, and I can direct you if you need any help in the matter of choosing your acquaintances. Oh! I am not at all kind. If you were not Margaret Latimer's godchild and Denis's little friend, I am sure I should do just as much. Your face is your recommendation, my dear; I have fallen in love with you."

Penelope made reply to this in her prettiest fashion, and then something moved her, urged her to speak of him.

"Have—have you seen Denis lately?" she asked. "Is he well?"

"I had a flying visit from him about a week or ten days ago," Lady Susan said, rising to depart. "He came before you arrived, and chiefly, I think, to tell me about you. I suppose, however, you go frequently to the Court. I have not been since Denis brought his wife there. We met in town one day, and we did not—how shall I say it?—well," the old lady laughed, "Mrs. Denis Latimer is not quite sympathetic to me. I don't exactly understand—" and Lady Susan paused and frowned, she remembered all at once that Denis had said that Penelope was related to his wife. "My dear," the old lady said, "I hope I do not offend you with my plain speaking; I forgot for the moment that Mrs. Denis was connected with you. There is most assuredly nothing in you to recall association with her; and now may I have a peep at your arrangements? Dear me, how I used to revel in upholstering when I was young; give me a hammer and a box of nails, and a very wide window to drape, and I was happy, though we had very little scope in my young days for all these picturesque effects. You are quite an artist! Everything is charming!"

Mrs. Rochdale, of course, heard in some roundabout way of Lady Susan's early visit to Thicket Croft.

She was down at Latimer Court again for a few days when this news came. Marcia had not invited her mother, and indeed she gave Mrs. Rochdale very faint encouragement to repeat these little journeys from town.

She felt that her mother had a motive in coming so often, and she resented what she was pleased to call such impertinence, the while she was made furious by the open and hearty warmth with which Denis always welcomed his wife's mother to his house.

"He is glad of her to come because she is an excuse for him to go off and leave us alone together," Marcia thought, in her sullen, suspicious way.

And, in fact, there was a great element of truth in the thought, although it was not for this reason alone that Denis was glad to see Mrs. Rochdale arrive at the Court.

Men, however deeply they grieve and suffer, cannot live perpetually in an atmosphere of sorrow and shade. They do not forget, and in the night hours, or in some gap in an hour of amusement, the trouble will rear its head and be recognized in its full value; but a man



["LOOK! HERE IS A PICTURE OF THICKEST CROFT," SAID PENELOPE; IS IT NOT A PRETTY PLACE, AUNT JULIA?"]

when he is well and strong, and free from morbid fancies, can still enjoy a cheerful, pleasant life, no matter how deeply he may have been wounded.

Marcia's greatest fault and folly in her dealing with her husband was the perpetual gloom with which she permeated their mutual existence.

Denis might have almost found an excuse for her jealousy and temper now and then, if he had seen her make some slight effort to please him, some attempt to be bright and happy, to take a prominent part in the interests and amusements which she knew he liked; if, in fact, she had been anything but what she was, a woman consumed with the most unworthy suspicions and doubts, tortured by senseless jealousy, ready to fall instantly into the most unreasoning and painful anger, a sullen woman sitting like a figure of stone sometimes for days at a time at their solitary meals, a perpetual source of discomfort and depression.

Had she showed the smallest tact, the faintest intimation of a true woman's nature and heart, had she made the very least overtures to his sympathy and to his tenderness, Marcia Latimar could have been almost a happy woman. Denis was so ready to see good in her, to reciprocate that good, to live not only in peace, but in pleasant fellowship and communion with his wife, to try and atone in any way for the vital fact that he did not love her as he should have done, that Marcia would have found it an easy task to win for herself a life with him which, if lacking the deeper, stronger bond, would yet have been a life with a sunshine and gladness that might have made her almost a queen.

Marcia, however, did none of these things, the faintest grain of a philosophy was absent altogether from her composition, and she had no intention of being contented and satisfied with the real affection Denis could have given her by degrees when she knew that his love could never be hers. Hence the reason that

Denis was always glad to see Mrs. Rochdale. She was not only a relief from the heavy depression produced by Marcia's most ill-judged manner, but she exerted herself in every way to be a companion and to supply the deficiencies of her daughter to the best of her power.

Denis Latimar in days gone by had regarded Mrs. Rochdale with a certain amount of harshness if not with contempt. He little knew then how gladly he would learn to welcome the very worldliness he so much despised.

Marcia had received the news of Penelope's last undertaking with a sneer, of course; but when her mother spoke of Lady Susan's visit to Thicket Croft her face had flushed a little.

They were sitting at luncheon when Mrs. Rochdale imparted this news, and his wife's eagle eyes immediately detected the colour that came into Denis' face as the subject was introduced.

"I was given to understand Lady Susan regarded herself as an invalid, and could not undertake any visiting," she said in her most disagreeable way. "At least that was the reason she gave for refusing my invitation here; but perhaps, Denis, you can explain this matter?"

Denis looked at her for an instant in silence.

"Lady Susan called on Miss Desborough at my request, if that is what you mean, Marcia," he said quietly, but very coldly.

"Of course, and why not?" said Mrs. Rochdale, rushing hurriedly to the rescue. "I think it was very kind of you, Denis, to remember Penelope—a girl cannot have too many friends. Was it not good of Denis to interest himself for your cousin, Marcia?"

Marcia looked for an instant at her husband's face which was bent over his plate.

"Very good," she answered, and her voice was absolutely quiet. But somehow—how he could not have explained—Denis felt a thrill of discomfort in the sound, discomfort that seemed to hang in some way about Penelope.

He knew Marcia's jealous nature, however, and he dismissed the feeling immediately as meaning only the usual anger and folly.

If he could only have known how much it really meant!

(To be continued.)

A CURIOUS discovery is announced by Dr. Beddoe. It is that there is a direct relation between men's pursuits and the colour of their hair. Thus, we are told that an unusual proportion of men with dark straight hair enter the ministry; that the red-whiskered men are apt to be given to horseflesh; and that tall, vigorous, blonde, long-headed men, lineal descendants of the Vikings or of the Athelings who "won England, and refused not the hard sword play," still furnish a large contingent to our travellers and emigrants.

THE Indian tribes carry on communication almost solely by signs. To learn this form of speech without words is sufficiently well for ordinary intercourse to be declared by a competent authority to be as difficult as the acquisition of a foreign language; to master it one must have been born in a lodge of Plain Indians, and have been accustomed to its daily and hourly use from its earliest to mature years. By order of the United States Government there has recently been published a most interesting work that forms a sort of dictionary of the signs in use by the North American Indians. Some of these are most complicated; others are at once simple and significant. As an example of the latter class, take a sign made by the Blackfeet for mother-in-law—namely, the holding of the hand over the face, as if to shut her from view. This sign proceeds from the custom among them of never seeing her face. One tribe, indeed, with a regard for the eternal fitness of things that makes one blush for civilisation, say their god told them that they must have nothing to do with their mother-in-law.



[ON THE PLATFORM WAS A TALL LADY, DRESSED FROM HEAD TO FOOT IN BLACK, AND DEEPLY VEILED.]

BASIL'S BRIDE.

CHAPTER XXV.

GONE!

It was Travice who first discovered Dolores' flight from Chesham Royal, and her distress was overwhelming as she stood in the empty rooms, which in their disorder seemed to bear sad witness to their desertion. The young wife's note, addressed to her husband, lay on the mantelpiece in a conspicuous position. Travice snatched it up, and an expression of acute disappointment clouded her face as she saw that the envelope was sealed, and stamped with the Chesham crest. No chance of forcing it open by means of hot water, or any of those other artifices in which the lady's maid was an adept.

In spite of the fact that Travice had, as a rule, her feelings well under control, she had still enough of the original woman left in her to act under impulse sometimes, and on this occasion, without stopping to calculate consequences, she opened the dressing-room door which communicated with Captain Chesham's apartments, the key chanced to be in the lock, and found herself face to face with Basil, who, attired in dressing-gown and slippers, was trifling languidly with the breakfast that Jarvis had just brought up to him.

He looked up in surprise at finding his solitude invaded, and the surprise deepened as he saw the expression in Travice's eyes.

"Here is a letter from your wife," she said, briefly, giving it to him, and Basil, struck by some vague fear, tore it hastily open and glanced rapidly through its contents, watched the while by the maid.

"You know what this letter says?" he demanded, growing paler, as he crushed the pathetic little note up in his hands.

"No; but I guess that Mrs. Chesham tells you she has left you. Am I right?"

Basil answered her question by another.

"You knew her intention, doubtless?"

"I knew nothing, except that she was very miserable."

"Then you do not know where she has gone?"

"I have no idea even, unless it be to the river," she replied, with intense bitterness, while a half sob escaped her lips. Basil started violently. The river! he had not thought of that.

"Why should you suggest such a thing?" he asked, biting his white lips hard.

"Because it is the natural end to a woman's sorrow when it grows too great to be borne."

Travice was reckless of what she said now.

Indeed, she had a fierce pleasure in taunting the man who, from the very first, had openly showed his dislike for her.

As for Basil, he was not quite certain that this woman had not assisted Dolores in her flight, and above all things he must try to discover her whereabouts, therefore it might be policy to endeavour to conciliate Travice.

He rose and led the way to his wife's apartments. How cold and cheerless the erstwhile pretty boudoir looked, with the grey ashes in the grate, the dust thick on the furniture, the murky light of the November morning struggling dimly through the curtains! He could not have told what he expected to gain from his visit, and yet it is certain that the sight of those empty rooms struck a sudden chill to his heart.

He turned to his companion imploringly.

"If you know anything of where Mrs. Chesham has gone, I entreat you to tell me. Think what it means for her to be thrown unprotected on the merciless world, young, beautiful, and utterly unversed in evil as she is! For her sake, and you have always professed affection for her, if not for mine, I implore you to be frank with me."

"I cannot tell you what I do not know myself," returned the woman, hoarsely. "Last

night, when I left my mistress, I had not the faintest idea that I shouldn't find her here this morning. Give me her note. Let me see what she says."

It was a bold request, and one that at any other time would have brought forth a pretty sharp rebuke from Captain Chesham, but under present circumstances he deemed it wisest to comply with it.

Without a word, he handed the letter to the maid, who read it from end to end as quickly as he had done a few minutes before.

She gave it back to him with a deep sigh, and seemed to become suddenly thoughtful.

"Well!" he exclaimed impatiently, after a few moments' pause, "can you give me any suggestion that is likely to be of use?"

She shook her head despondingly.

"I am afraid not."

"Were you in your mistress's confidence at all?" he inquired, a slight flush rising to his pallid face as he asked the question.

"No; but it did not require any confidence from her to tell me she was very wretched, and that you were the cause of her misery," flashed back the woman. "Your own conscience will tell you how you treated her; and if she has really taken her own life, her death lies at your door!"

"How dare you utter such things to me!" She laughed bitterly, and threw back her head with a defiant gesture.

"I dare anything; I am no longer in your service, remember, and it matters nothing to me what you say or think. My task now is to find my mistress."

Baffled, and sick at heart, Basil returned to his own room. There could be no doubt that Dolores had really left the house, and the question that presented itself was how she was to be traced.

He entirely rejected Travice's theory of suicide; if Dolores had contemplated taking her own life, she would certainly not have written that letter.

No, the probability was that her shame at

being taxed with guilt had goaded her to leaving her husband, and the scene of her attempted crime. Anyhow, it was Basil's duty to find her, for who could say what harm might befall the beautiful girl in her mad desperation?

While the young man was miserably debating on the steps he had better take, Jarvis entered the dressing-room.

"Please, sir, the person who has been here ever since you was taken ill—Mr. Osborne—wants to know whether you feel well enough to see him this morning."

Osborne! The very man for such an emergency as this.

Basil at once gave orders for him to be brought upstairs, and, when the detective appeared, told him of his wife's departure, and his desire that she should be found and induced to return.

"I suppose, sir, you and Mrs. Chesham had had a—a—misunderstanding?" interrogated Osborne, with an awkward little cough. "It is of some importance that I should know whether this is the case, as it may be of use to me in my search."

Basil coloured painfully. It was like touching a wound with a red-hot iron to answer such a question, and yet he recognised that it was out of no idle curiosity the detective had just put it.

"Yes," he said, "it is true we had had a misunderstanding, and we were both very miserable in consequence; no doubt that had a great deal to do with my wife taking this rash step."

"Do you think she did it entirely on her own responsibility, sir, or had she a confidante, who advised her to do it?" asked the detective, significantly.

"What do you mean?" queried Basil.

"Why, from what I have heard in the servants' hall, it seems that Mrs. Chesham's maid was exclusively devoted to her mistress, and I don't think it unlikely she may be at the bottom of this disappearance."

"I think not. I had an idea of that sort myself, but Traviex's behaviour leads me to suppose I have made a mistake."

"As for that, I wouldn't give a pin's point for what the woman swore on her Bible oath," said Osborne, contemptuously. "She is an out and outer, she is, and would swear a lie as soon as look at you."

"What makes you think so?"

"The way she met you when you taxed her with listening at the library door, for one thing, but I have various other reasons as well. I have seen a goodish bit of her this last week"—which was true, for Osborne had made a point of frequenting the housekeeper's room, where Traviex together with the other lady's maids, and the butler took their meals, and he had also made very friendly advances to Traviex, who, however, had treated them with greatest disdain. "Were you aware, sir, that she is disguised?"

"Disguised?" repeated Basil.

"Well, she wears a wig and stains her skin, and, what to me is the most suspicious point of all, tries to make herself look older than she is; and for a woman to do that is, as you know, sir, a most unusual thing."

Basil would probably have attached more importance to the disclosure if his mind had been at ease, but racked with anxiety as he was on Dolores' behalf, he was inclined to let all other things slide. Moreover, he was impatient for Osborne to begin his search at once.

"All right, sir," said that functionary, when the young officer implored him to lose no time in following up the slightest clue that might present itself. "It's true I have some thing important to tell you about Mrs. Chesham's father, but as it has waited so long, it won't hurt if it waits a bit longer. I'll come back and see you as soon as I have any news of the lady."

Basil himself was not yet strong enough to leave the house, so he had to submit to that hardest of trials in anxiety—inaction.

In a little over an hour the detective returned.

"Well!" exclaimed Basil, in an eager voice that hardly rose above a whisper, "what news?"

"Mrs. Chesham left for Paddington by the morning mail. By this time she is in London," rejoined Osborne in a matter-of-fact voice. "I first of all inquired at the station, and the result was immediate success. The thing to do now is to go to London, and continue enquiries at Paddington; but unfortunately there is not a train for another three hours, so I have wired to a friend of mine in town to go there and see if a lady answering to Mrs. Chesham's description got out of the early mail. If she did, she is pretty sure to have been observed, and it is more than likely that we shall get hold of the cabman who drove her wherever she intended going. That is all we can do at present."

It seemed to Basil, feverish as he was, very little; nevertheless he saw that Osborne was right.

"You had better go up by the next train," he said. "Having seen Mrs. Chesham will be an advantage to you that your friend won't possess."

"Quite right, sir. At the same time, I was going to ask you for a photograph of the lady."

But this Basil did not possess. He had wished his wife to be photographed when they were in London, but it had never struck him afterwards to ask her for one of the likenesses.

"It is quite possible Traviex may have one," he remarked. "She went with her mistress to the photographer's, and I remember Mrs. Chesham saying to her, laughingly, that if the portraits were successful, she would give her one."

"In that case, I'll ask her presently," said Osborne, quietly, "and as nothing can be done in the interval, I may as well tell you what I found out concerning Mr. Verschoyle. You were right in thinking he had changed his name. His real name was Sigismund Gerard St. Maur, and he used to live at Priors Abbey, not two miles away from this house."

This was indeed a startling piece of intelligence, and, preoccupied as Basil was, he was immediately all interest and attention. And yet, singularly enough, directly the communication was made he felt that it was true, and even wondered some suspicion of it had never crossed his mind before.

"From whom did you learn this?" he asked.

"From a lawyer's clerk, whom I ferreted out. He could not tell me much more than this, because Mr. Verschoyle, or St. Maur, was most careful to keep his identity secret; but when he sold Priors Abbey, of course he had to do it in his own name to make the sale valid. He made it worth while for people who knew him to hold their tongues, and it is likely enough that if he had been still living, I might have tried in vain to fathom his secret. Of course his reason for going away from the Abbey was his wife's elopement, or rather her supposed elopement, for from the fact of her body being discovered in the cavern it did not seem as if she had really left him with any evil intention. And I suppose the remains were really Mrs. St. Maur's."

"I don't think there can be any doubt of it," responded Basil, thoughtfully. "Even at the time of her disappearance people said it was hard to believe in her guilt."

"People who said that were people who didn't know human nature," remarked Osborne, sagaciously. "To my mind the truest proverb there is is that the unexpected always happens."

Basil took no notice of this bit of philosophy. He was calling to mind Mr. Verschoyle's knowledge of his own life—a knowledge that had mystified him not a little at the moment. Now it was explained, for, of course, Verschoyle had known his family intimately, and had even been personally

acquainted with himself in his early boyhood. This elucidated also Verschoyle's willingness to give Dolores to him. At the time of his marriage he had been very much struck with the oddness of the fact that a father should care to bestow his only daughter on a perfect stranger, and also had been impressed with Verschoyle's mysterious knowledge of his own concerns. These were mysteries no longer. In the light of the detective's information all was clear, save indeed that strange midnight interview of which he had been a witness, and of which he could hardly hope ever to obtain a solution.

"Of Abdul, the Indian servant, I can't get even a trace," proceeded Osborne, in a dissatisfied tone of voice. "I have made very careful inquiries at Highgate, and all round the neighbourhood of the White House, but no one remembers seeing the man after the death of Mr. Verschoyle. However, I don't despair, for I am on the track of the cook and butler who were at the White House, and I expect they will be able to give me a good deal of help. It seems that when they left Highgate, they got married, and went to America to try their fortunes there, but somehow America don't seem to agree with 'em, so they're coming back to old England again. They'll arrive at Liverpool next week, and as soon as they get there, I'll meet them." Osborne paused, and finding Basil did not speak, he added, "I hope, sir, you are satisfied with what I have done."

"Quite satisfied," responded the young man, hastily; "my only regret is that you cannot go on with your inquiries just now, as all your energies must be given to the task of discovering where my wife has hidden herself."

"It is a pity," admitted the detective; "still, perhaps I may be able to run the two together. Anyhow, I'll do my best, for, bar professional zeal, I am really interested in the case," which was perfectly true. "Now, I think I'll go and see if Mrs. Traviex can give me the photograph we were speaking about."

Traviex was neither downstairs nor in her late mistress's apartments.

"I haven't seen her this morning," said the housekeeper, when Osborne appealed to her.

"She hasn't had any breakfast, and if she wasn't Traviex, I might think she was ill; but being who she is, there's no sayin' what she may be up to, for of all the queer tempered, silent creatures I ever come across, she beats every one."

From which it may be safely inferred that the lady's maid was no favourite with her fellow-servants.

Osborne wasted no time in making further inquiries, but proceeded at once to Traviex's room, where he knocked at the door. There was no answer, and Osborne, applying his eye to the keyhole, was rewarded with the knowledge that the key had been withdrawn from the lock. Very gently he tried the door. It was locked.

"Ah!" he said to himself, "my lady has gone out—no doubt to follow her mistress, and we shall see no more of her at Chesham Royal!"

He was wrong, as the event proved. In effect Traviex was at this moment at the station, bent on the same errand as he himself had been half-an-hour earlier. But clever as the detective undoubtedly was, he made mistakes occasionally, and this time his mistake lay in the fact that he took for granted Traviex was in her mistress's confidence.

He remained for a few minutes outside the door, thinking deeply.

"If she has gone away for good, she has no doubt taken with her all papers, or anything else that might give a clue as to who she really is," he muttered, "so I am not likely to gain much by forcing an entrance. Still, there is always the chance that something may have been overlooked—especially with women, who are like ostriches, bury their heads in the sand, and forget all about the two great long

legs, they leave sticking out. After all, I think it's worth a trial."

Saying which, he took from his pocket three or four oddly-shaped keys, one of which he inserted in the lock. After a little humming-log," it turned, and a minute afterwards the detective found himself in Traviçe's room.

It was a servant's room of the ordinary type, but it was exquisitely neat and clean. Not a thing was out of place—even the house shoes that Traviçe had discarded when she put on her out-door boots were placed neatly together under a chair, and her black silk apron lay folded up on the chest of drawers. There was another thing on the chest of drawers too—a crimson plush frame, from which the likeness had been withdrawn. Osborne remained looking at this for a few seconds in a meditative manner.

"Now is it possible that she really does not know where Mrs. Chesham is, and has taken the photo for the purpose of tracing her?" he murmured, stroking his clean-shaven chin gently with his forefinger. "If so, she'll be back before very long, for she's quite 'cute enough to go to the station first and pump the porters, and that fool I saw will tell her all he knows. Suppose she should return and catch me here! There'd be a fine to do. Can I risk it, I wonder?"

He pondered the question gravely, while his eyes rested on a heavy, substantial looking trunk in one corner of the room. If he could only examine the contents of that trunk how much he might learn of the mysterious maid and her former life!

"I'll do it!" he muttered at last. "And if she does come, I must trust to my wits for silencing her. Here goes!"

He took another and smaller bunch of keys from his pocket, and, advancing cautiously across the room, knelt down in front of the trunk.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OSBORNE INVESTIGATES.

The lock of the trunk was not an ordinary one, and none of Osborne's keys fitted it. But the detective was not discouraged, and, if an onlooker had been present he would have been amazed at the quickness and neatness of the man's proceedings.

Finding his first attempt useless, he took another key from his pocket-book—a skeleton key this time, and by means of it he achieved his object. The interior of the trunk was as neat as the room had led him to expect. Carefully folded clothes lay on the top, with sheets of silver paper between them. Osborne lifted them out, and spread them carefully on the floor, taking care not to disarrange them in the slightest degree, and making mental notes the while that would enable him to put them back exactly in the same order they were before.

His movements were still marked by the same celerity, and in an incredibly short space of time, every article was removed from the trunk, and the striped linen of the bottom was fully exposed. Not a single scrap of writing—nothing in fact save the ordinary impedimenta of a high-class servant was amongst the contents.

The detective scratched his head; he had certainly expected to discover something more than this, and his disappointment was great. Did he find nothing compromising because there was nothing compromising to find, and the maid was really the person she pretended to be?

Osborne thought not. Experience had taught him to judge human nature pretty accurately, and even before he penetrated Traviçe's disguise he had scented a mystery in the woman; subsequent knowledge of her had confirmed him in the idea.

But facts are stubborn things, and the fact remained that if Traviçe had any secrets she had taken every precaution to hide them, and with success so far.

"So unlike a woman, too!" exclaimed the baffled searcher. "As a rule they betray themselves by a diary; and as for letters, they have a perfect mania for keeping them, let their contents be ever so dangerous."

He eyed the things he had turned out in an extremely dissatisfied manner, and it struck him that there were very few of them after all. And yet the trunk had seemed pretty full when he opened it first.

He examined it again carefully, then took out a foot rule and measured it.

"I have it now!" he said to himself, triumphantly as he restored the rule to his pocket. "The trunk has a false bottom, and anything the woman may consider important, she has put underneath. She's a deep one, and no mistake! Now I must look for the spring."

He found it without much trouble, and lifted the false bottom out. His suspicions were correct; the trunk contained several more articles, which he proceeded to investigate. The first he pulled out was queer enough, and he held it at arm's length while he examined it.

Nothing more nor less than a very old poke bonnet, with a front of ragged grey hair tacked inside! And hanging to it, an equally dilapidated shawl of a rusty black colour.

"Well, I'm—blessed!" soliloquised the detective; "now I wonder whether this is intended for future use, or whether it has been used already. I'll soon find out."

He held the bonnet to the light, and cautiously pulled out one or two long, glossy black hairs.

"Evidently she has worn it, and is putting it by for future use if necessary," he continued; and from this discovery of the detective's, the reader will easily surmise that it was none other than Traviçe who had impersonated the gipsy fortune teller on the day of the picnic, and who had spoken the words of warning to Laocelles which had so alarmed him, and had resulted in his departure the same evening.

We may also at the same time explain that Traviçe had accidentally seen the letter Darcy Monroe had received that morning from his father; for the young man had dropped it from his pocket in the corridor on his way downstairs, and Traviçe after a quick glance at its contents, had given it to his valet, who had restored it to his master without mentioning the maid's name. Hence the fortune teller's knowledge which had so amazed poor Darcy, and had had such a disastrous effect on his relations with Beatrice Risdon.

Traviçe, it may be mentioned, had never liked Beatrice Risdon, being in fact jealous of her influence with Dolores, and the affection the young wife had conceived for her. Therefore she was not sorry to find an opportunity of doing the young lady "a bad turn" and at the same time giving her a motive for hastening her departure from Chesham Royal.

How well she succeeded in her spiteful intentions we already know.

Patting the wig and bonnet on one side, Osborne lifted up a small, carved box, which gave out a pleasant odour, for it was made of sandal-wood, but before he had time to examine it, he heard the sound of footsteps in the corridor outside.

"Is that you, Traviçe?" inquired a voice, just audible to the detective's strained ears.

"We have been wondering what had become of you. Where have you been?"

"Out for a walk," was the brief answer in Traviçe's clear, detached tones.

"I wish you would come into my room for a minute," said the first voice, which belonged to Lady Chesham's maid. "I've got in a frightful muddle over her ladyship's tea gown. You remember she said I was to copy that new one of Mrs. Chesham's that came down from London last week, and I can't manage the front of it at all. Just come and give me your advice."

There was a pause, and, hardened as he was, Osborne's heart beat a little faster as he listened to hear whether the request was com-

plied with. Luckily for him, it happened that the girl who made it was the one person in the Chesham household for whom Traviçe had a kindly feeling. She had been of use to the older woman on more than one occasion, and Traviçe was not by nature ungrateful. Besides, she had plenty of time for packing up, having resolved to take the next train to London, which did not start for another couple of hours.

To Osborne's great relief he heard the door of the next apartment close, and judged from the sound that Traviçe had gone in with the other maid. It behoved him, however, to lose no time in making his escape, if he wished to remain undiscovered.

Not having time to open the quaint Eastern-looking chest, he put it on one side, and then placed the false bottom in the trunk, and lifted back the various articles he had piled on the floor, with such quick and deft fingers that the task was completed in less than five minutes. After that he took up the sandal-wood box, covered it with his handkerchief, and let himself out of the room, the door of which he silently closed, and relocked. His footsteps on the stairs were shod in velvet, the most delicate ear could not have caught their echo.

Nevertheless, when he reached his own apartment he sat down and wiped the drops of moisture from his forehead. It had been a ticklish job and a risky one to boot. What could he have said if he had been caught in the act of opening the woman's trunk, and examining its contents? He had no warrant for doing so, not the slightest vestigial authority, for his own suspicions that Traviçe knew the retreat of her young mistress would have counted for just nothing at all, and it was quite on the cards that the maid might have given him in custody on a charge of attempted stealing.

"She is quite capable of it," he muttered, chuckling at his success, "and, by Jove! if that box had been found in my possession, I should have stood a very good chance of being convicted. But fortune has befriended me, and not for the first time either!"

He was nothing if not venturesome, and in the long run he had found boldness pay. Besides, he was a man to whom playing with edged tools was an absolute enjoyment—he loved to stand on the edge of a precipice, and look down into the chasm below, knowing that one false step—one swerving either to right or left, meant certain death. Not that he was exactly foolhardy, for before undertaking anything he carefully counted the chances for and against, and if he found they were not in his favour, he would abandon his scheme without the smallest hesitation.

Whether he was justified in searching Traviçe's belongings, it is hard to say. Certainly a scrupulous man would not have done it—but then, it is not often you find scrupulous men playing the rôle of detective.

Once alone, he endeavoured to open the box, trying several keys in succession—for he was armed with an amazing quantity of them!—and inserting them in the lock with infinite patience and delicacy. But none would fit, and at last he left off in despair.

Clearly the lock was an excessively complicated one, and calculated to resist all but the very highest professional skill.

Osborne bent his brows in perplexity while he contemplated it afresh.

What was to be done? It was quite evident he could not open the box himself, and to abandon it without having had even a peep at its contents was more than he could bear to do. His idea that it held documents of value was rendered stronger, and he still clung desperately to the notion that Traviçe's fate was in some way involved with that of her mistress.

Besides, even if he had desired to restore it to its rightful owner, it was unlikely the chance would be given him, for the probabilities were that Traviçe having no duties for her mistress to perform, would remain in her apartment

for the rest of the day—except when she went down to meals; and by the time the servants' dinner was in progress, Osborne would be well on his way to London.

The only alternative was for him to take the box with him to town, get the lock picked and afterwards contrive to return the property to its legitimate possessor, trusting to chance that his connection with the matter would never be traced.

"And it's not likely to be," he thought. "Not a soul will suspect I was in the woman's room—not even Travice herself. Yes, I think I am safe, and I'll contrive to provide against contingencies as they arise."

He glanced at his watch, and saw that it was later than he had fancied, and that it behooved him to make his preparations for his journey.

Half an hour later a sandy-haired man, with a bushy beard and moustache, and a healthy red colour in his cheeks, slipped out of the little side door of Chesham Royal that gave access to the terrace—the self same door by which Dolores had left the house some hours earlier.

He was dressed in a rough tweed suit, and carried a small black bag in his hand and his appearance suggested a gardener or artisan out on a holiday.

There was nothing at all striking in his personality—he was simply an ordinary type of respectable upper-class workman, at whom no one would have the curiosity to look a second time.

He walked with long, swift strides towards the station, and got there before the up train was signalled.

On the platform was a tall lady, dressed from head to foot in black, and deeply veiled, who was looking impatiently down the line, in the direction from which the train must come.

It was Travice, and the trunk, with whose exterior and interior the sandy-haired man was so well acquainted, stood on the ground beside her.

Slipping quietly past into the booking-office, the sandy-haired gentleman took a third-class ticket to Paddington, and remained chatting with the clerk until the train came puffing in.

He saw Travice get in a second-class carriage, and he himself sprang into a smoking compartment next to hers, and beguiled the tedium of the journey by the consumption of extremely choice Havannah cigars—such cigars as are not usually smoked by third-class passengers.

Well up to time the train arrived at the terminus, which was immediately all bustle and confusion.

In the midst of it Travice hailed a hansom, and, after getting inside, gave some low-voiced instructions to the driver, which he of the sandy beard could not contrive to overhear. But he was by no means nonplussed. Springing into another hansom, he too gave his directions to the driver in a whisper.

"Follow that cab in front of us, but at a respectful distance so that our purpose may not be guessed."

The cabman nodded intelligently, and Osborne—for, of course, it was he—lollied back against the cushions, arranging in his own mind how he should word his telegram to Captain Chesham, telling him that his wife was found. For he never for one moment doubted that Travice was on her way to join her mistress.

At last the first cab drew up in front of a quiet-looking hotel in one of the streets leading from the Strand to the Thames Embankment.

Travice got out, paid the driver, and had her trunk taken indoors; and as soon as she was safely out of sight Osborne followed her example.

He lost no time in making inquiries of the hotel people. Describing Dolores, he asked if a lady answering to such a description was staying there, and received in reply a decided negative.

This took him slightly aback, but he was by no means discouraged even yet. It required some little diplomacy on his part to procure a sitting room on the same floor and opposite the one taken by the lady who had just arrived, and who, he found, had given her name as Mrs. Smith; but, finally, he was successful in his endeavours, and a short time afterwards was sitting in a fairly comfortable armchair, ten, bread-and-butter and water-cresses before him, and his door slightly ajar in order that any movement of his neighbour might not escape him.

Again he was doomed to disappointment. No one came out of the next room; but presently he heard some one go in, and he stationed himself just outside the door so as to intercept any exit that might be attempted.

Instead of Mrs. Chesham, whom he fully expected to see, he was confronted by the chamber-maid, a volatile young person, who was not proof against the temptation of stopping to have a minute's chat with a gentleman who called her "My dear!"

"But I mustn't stay," she added, suddenly, her conscience smiting her. "The lady inside is ill—got fainting attacks, and I'm going to have a doctor fetched to her. I promised I would send for one straight off."

"Is she alone—the lady?" asked Osborne. "Of course she is, poor thing, and that's what makes it all the worse for her. She do look terrible bad I must say—tremblin' all over as if she'd got the agy. And that's what I expect she have got," continued the fair damsel, hurrying off downstairs, and leaving Osborne in an unusually disturbed frame of mind.

Was the illness genuine, or was it only a ruse on the part of this woman to throw any possible watchers off the scent?

He decided in favour of the former hypothesis, and after the doctor had been and departed, and the friendly chambermaid had informed him that the medical man had ordered the lady straight to bed, he made up his mind that Dolores would not come to the hotel, and it therefore behoved him to pursue his inquiries without delay.

The friend to whom he had wired a description of the young girl earlier in the morning, lived at Westminster, and to Westminster Osborne accordingly had himself driven.

"Confound her!" he muttered, savagely, the pronoun referring to Travice; "perhaps she has led me on a false scent after all, and it's quite on the cards that she has done it purposely, taking for granted I should follow her." As the reader knows, he was giving the lady's maid credit for more subtlety than she could really lay claim to. "But I'll be even with her yet."

His fellow detective had not been idle, and had news for him. A searching interrogation of the porters at Paddington Station had elicited from one of them the fact that a lady answering to Mrs. Chesham's description had arrived there by the morning mail, but where she had gone to it was impossible to say, as she had not called a cab, but had walked away, carrying her bag in her hand.

"Well, and what have you done since?" asked Osborne, moodily, for he had pinned all his hopes on the potential cab.

"I have sent on your description to every police-station, and have made inquiries at all the hotels," was the answer. "I could do no more."

Osborne gave him a few instructions, and then went back to Paddington to see if there was anything further to be learnt. Nothing at all; when Dolores left the station, every trace of her seemed to have vanished.

Baffled, but not discouraged, the detective went back to his hotel, and asked the obliging chambermaid if any visitor had come to see Mrs. Smith. No; Mrs. Smith was too ill to see visitors, even if they had come, for she was suffering from a severe attack of intermittent fever.

Assured on this point, Osborne decided he could do nothing further till the morning, and resolved to take the opportunity of getting the sandal-wood box opened.

Wrapping it carefully in brown paper, he sallied forth with it under his arm, and crossing Waterloo-Bridge, went down a little by-street, where dwelt a man he knew—a man popularly supposed to be one of the cleverest locksmiths in London, and whose acquaintance Osborne had made while he was getting up a case against some notorious burglars, who were indebted very considerably to the locksmith's skill for the success with which they had carried out a long series of daring robberies, which involved the opening of safes and iron deed-boxes.

The burglars had tried their game once too often, and Osborne had been instrumental in their capture, and had received a very handsome honorarium in consideration of his services.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DOLORES TAKES LODGINGS.

WE left Dolores quitting the restaurant in the Edgware Road with the golden-haired lady who gave her name as Miss Maude Stanley, and who had promised to take her to some quiet apartments not far away.

Innocent of evil herself, and not suspecting it in others unless it were actually forced upon her notice, it never struck Dolores that she was doing an extremely unwise thing in yielding herself to the guidance of a casual acquaintance, and there was not a shadow of mistrust in her mind as she walked by the side of Miss Stanley down a small, shabby genteel street, whose windows were ornamented for the most part with cards intimating that lodgings were to let within.

At one of these houses Miss Stanley paused and rang the bell. The house next to it was undergoing repairs, and the one on the other side was to let. It was old-fashioned and flat-fronted, very high, and with thick walls and heavy windows, evidently the product of an age when "Jerry builders" were unknown. But the bricks were grimed with many years' smoke, and there was a dismal air of having known better days about the house.

The bell was answered by a middle-aged woman dressed in rusty black, and wearing a widow's cap. Her appearance was not prepossessing, and to a more experienced observer, her bleared eyes and blue-tinted nose would have been highly suggestive of an affection for gin.

Dolores, however, was not an adept at noticing these signs; moreover she was so physically wearied with her sleepless night and miserable wanderings to and fro before she entered the restaurant, that every other feeling had given way to one of actual physical tiredness—an overwhelming desire for rest.

"This is Mrs. Brewer—the lady I told you about," said Miss Stanley, exchanging a rapid glance of intelligence with the landlady. "I can't introduce you to her because I don't know your name."

"My name!" repeated Dolores, confusedly. This was a dilemma for which she was not prepared. It would never do to give her own name, and her mind rapidly flashed over half-a-dozen aliases.

"My name is Smith," she said at last, very lamely, and blushing deeply as the untruth fell from her lips.

"Miss Smith, I suppose?"

"Yes, Miss Smith."

The introduction was thereupon effected, and the fair Maude added,—

"This young lady wants a couple of rooms—bed and sitting-room. Your third floor is to let, isn't it?"

"My third floor!" repeated the landlady, looking at Miss Stanley. "Do you think that will suit the lady best?"

"Yes, I do; and later on she can come

down lower when the people in the drawing-room leave," responded the younger woman in a significant voice.

Oh, those interminable stairs! Dolores thought she would never get to the top of them. Half-way up she paused.

"Can't I have apartments a little lower down?" she faltered, her heart palpitating with the effort of climbing in her present fatigued state.

"To-morrow, dearie, to-morrow you shall have the drawing-rooms if you wish it," responded the landlady, insinuatingly. "But, of course, the price will be much higher—naturally."

This reminded Dolores that nothing had been mentioned as to the rent she was to pay. She asked Mrs. Brewer how much it would be.

"Well," said the latter, deliberately, "of course this is a very good neighbourhood—near Hyde Park and the West End, and I ought to charge pretty high, but as you're all alone I won't be 'ard on you. Shall we say five-and-twenty shillin' a week, and extra for boot cleanin' and bed linen? That's fair enough, I'm sure. No one could complain as it's too much."

Dolores, knowing nothing of the relative prices of apartments, reflected that she could well afford to pay the price named, and so closed with the offer. Then she commenced her mounting again, and at length found herself in a dismal little room, with a scrap of carpet on the middle of the floor, but without curtains, and having a couple of chairs, a "cheffonier," and a very uninviting-looking horsehair couch by way of furniture.

Dolores heart sank, even while she listened to the landlady's fond eulogiums on the comfort and the homeliness of the apartment.

"As for the curtains, I took 'em down to 'ave 'em washed, but they'll be home again in a day or two, and then you shall 'ave 'em up," she said. "Then you've the advantage of bein' 'igh up, and out of the way of the noise of the street. I'll light a fire in no time while you're in the bedroom takin' off your things."

The bedroom was rather worse than the sitting-room, inasmuch as it was more suggestive of possible dirt. Our poor little heroine shuddered. She had not the courage to go downstairs again and seek lodgings elsewhere, but inwardly she resolved that the very next day she would take her departure—for by that time she would be rested and better able to cope with the difficulties of her situation.

She took her "things" off washed from her face the strata of blacks that the delightful London air had already deposited on her fair skin, and then returned to the sitting-room, which looked a little more cheerful in the blaze of a fire now burning in the grate. What a transformation a fire is capable of effecting! The grandest room, without one, has a cheerless, inhospitable air, while the humblest kitchen looks the very some of comfort while the bright flames flash on the tin covers, and throw ruddy shadows on the walls!

Dolores was glad to be left alone, and as soon as the two women had departed, she went to the window and looked out.

The prospect was not cheerful. Opposite were two or three houses in a block, everyone to let, and all more or less dilapidated, and minus window panes. The street itself was well off the main thoroughfares, and very little traffic went through it—but however great the traffic might have been, Dolores could not have benefited much from it, seeing that she was so high above it.

The more she looked at the rooms, the less she liked them, and the same remark holds good with regard to the landlady.

"But I will leave to-morrow," she said to herself with decision. "I shall be better able to look out for myself, after I have had a good night's rest."

Presently Mrs. Brewer came up with a tray on which was a brown teapot and cup and saucer.

"It's rather early for tea," she observed, as she set it down, "but law! tea's always welcome and refreshin' accordin' to my notions, and I thought you'd be glad of a cup after your journey."

Dolores was grateful for the thoughtfulness of the attention, and was not at all sorry to avail herself of it. Unfortunately the tea was very strong and bitter—so bitter that no amount of sugar, and the sky blue liquid called by the Londoner "milk" could make it palatable. Dolores drank one cup of it while the landlady was in the room, but no more.

"Now, if I was you, I'd just have a nice nap," said Mrs. Brewer, in her persuasive tones. "I'll draw the sofa in front of the fire for you, and fetch a pillow out of the next room, and then you'll be nice and cosy."

Having fulfilled her promise she withdrew, and Dolores was glad enough to rest her tired limbs on the hard horsehair couch—though to be sure that battered old piece of furniture was about as uncondusive to rest as can well be imagined.

The young girl felt very desolate, very dispirited, very miserable. Unaccustomed as she was to solitude, the utter loneliness swept over her in a perfect wave of depression. What was she to do with her life in the future—would it be always like this, grey and mournful and full of passionate regret for a lost happiness?

A few tears forced themselves down her cheeks, but ere long she gave way to the drowsiness that had come upon her, and her silken lashed lids closed over the beautiful, sad eyes. In another minute or two she was fast asleep, and dreaming of those first days of her honeymoon with Basil under the blue Italian skies.

She woke suddenly, and with a start, all her senses on the alert, and a freezing terror in her veins. Had she not felt the presence of someone in the room, bending over her, and was not that the click of the lock as the door closed?

She sprang up and looked round. It was quite dark, and the fire had burnt itself out, but a faint quivering reflection from a street lamp below played on the wall, in a ghostly sort of fashion. Luckily Dolores was wearing her chateleine—which had already proved useful to her, and which she had put on more from the force of habit than anything else. The silver vesta box hanging to one of the chains contained some wax matches, and she struck one of these, and by its aid found a candlestick, in which, earlier in the day, she had noticed a scrap of candle, guttering down to its socket.

This she lighted, and after waiting a minute or two for the downbeat wick to recover itself, searched carefully round both the rooms to assure herself no one was hiding in them.

No, they were empty, but when the girl looked for her little black leather bag, she found it gone. Instantly her hand went to her pocket. Yes, her purse was gone too! And doubtless it was the act of taking it that had disturbed her from her slumber.

Dolores set her candlestick down on one of the rickety old cane-bottomed chairs, and pressed her fingers to her brow, which was aching and throbbing terribly.

It was clear to her she had been robbed; and from her sensations, and the remembrance of how bitter the tea had been, she was inclined to think she had been drugged too. Only in this way could she account for her long and unusually heavy slumber.

There was only one course of conduct for her. She must tax her landlady with the theft, try to get her money back, and leave the house without a moment's delay.

With trembling fingers she snatched up her hat and cloak, and after putting them on, went to the door and tried to open it. It resisted her strongest efforts, and the conviction forced itself upon her that she was locked in.

Like a mad creature she ran through the folding doors to the other room, only to meet

with the same result. Escape was out off—she was a prisoner!

Never, as long as she lives, will Dolores forget the horror of the first few minutes after she made this discovery. Trembling in every limb she sank down on one of the chairs, a mute prayer for help on her lips.

Why had they looked her in if not for some evil purpose? Thoughts of mysterious murders, accounts of which she had read in the papers now and again, flashed across her mind. Was that to be her fate? After these people had robbed her, did they intend to murder her so that she would not be able to accuse them of the theft?

Dead men tell no tales; and perhaps they reckoned on her solitary condition as an assurance that no inquiries would be made, whatever her fate might be.

A perfect frenzy of terror seized upon the girl—and not without due cause when we think of her position. How she blamed her own foolishness for letting the *soi-disant* Maude Stanley bring her to this house, and for not turning away when she stood at the door and saw the landlady.

The latter's face had filled her with disgust and repulsion; and if she had accepted the warning instinct gave her, she would have refused to enter at the last moment—while there was yet time.

But she had disregarded the warning, and now she was caught like a rat in a trap, and, so far as she could see, there was no hope of rescue, unless, indeed, she screamed loudly, and thus managed to attract attention.

She determined to do so, and advanced to the window, which she proceeded to open, but hardly had she felt the soft, rainy freshness of the air blow in upon her heated temples than she drew back, struck by another fear. Might she not, by screaming, precipitate her own fate?

She would be heard by the inhabitants of this house before any possible passer by could come to her aid, and the people who had drugged her once would not hesitate to do so a second time, if they saw their safety depended on it.

No, she dared not run the risk; she must think of something else. Would it be any good to write on a piece of paper that she was a prisoner, fling the paper down into the street, and chance its being picked up by a pedestrian?

At any rate she would try it; and she eagerly tore a leaf from her note-book, traced an earnest appeal for help on it, and then enclosing it in her silver match-box, which she detached from the chateleine, she leaned out of the window and dropped it on the pavement below.

Happily her aim was pretty good, and the precious missive did not fall into the area, as she feared it might, but lay on the edge of the curb—not quite so conspicuous a place as she could have wished, but still not altogether out of ken.

Then she leaned out in the darkness, and watched and waited, her heart beating in great, heavy throbs, and her lips moving in prayer.

How deserted the street seemed, and how dark it was! She could not tell the time, for her watch had been taken as well as her other possessions, and she had not yet heard a clock strike.

From afar came a subdued burn of the traffic of the great city, and above the roofs of the houses she could see a reflection of the "lights of London." In all that vast city she had not a single friend who would come to her aid!

She was wrong. In a certain quiet hotel close to the river were two people, both intent on tracing her whereabouts; but the one was stricken down by the hand of Fate in the shape of illness, and the other was baffled at the very outset of his quest.

Would deliverance ever come?

(To be continued.)

THE RAVENDALE MYSTERY.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. VANCE'S NARRATIVE.

At those words Frieker gave a long, low whistle. He saw at once all their significance; for Sir Philip namelessness, disinherence, imprisonment for fraud.

He saw, too, how terrible this knowledge must have been to the proud Sir Richard to whom the honour of the Ravendale name meant so much, and who, though he knew not one half of the wild goings on of Philip in London, had for years cast him off, and closed the doors of Ravendale Hall against him.

Enough to cause his death was this blot on the family name, this bar sinister, and for the moment Frieker was inclined to place full belief in Mrs. Vance's repeated assertion that Sir Richard had not been murdered, but had dropped dead from the shock he received.

Here was the explanation of Philip's marriage with Zola. She, too, knew the secret of her lover's birth, and she had used her knowledge as a means of furthering her own ambitions.

Philip had been ready enough to marry her, knowing that as his wife she would not denounce him. Without this explanation the marriage was an anomaly, so to say. No man in his senses, just come into a wealthy baronetcy that would place him in the best society in the county, would marry a wire-walker, a woman of notoriously loose character, when he could very well afford to pick and choose his wife from among the flower of English girlhood; least of all, such a man as Philip, who was not likely to be troubled with conscientious scruples about the woman he had dishonoured.

Till to-day this marriage had puzzled Frieker, although he had never associated it in any way with the murder. Now the whole course of Philip's conduct was easy to understand. His reason for concealing the whereabouts of Mrs. Vance was clear, likewise his anxiety to saddle suspicion on an innocent man.

On the other hand, this statement of Mrs. Vance's threw no mere light on the murder; except, indeed, that it strengthened suspicion against Mrs. Vance herself.

She was possessed of a secret concerning Philip, out of which she had made capital, as long as there was any to be made, by keeping it a secret. At last Philip had come to the end of his resources, or perhaps he put too much trust in Mrs. Vance's fidelity to his cause.

Anyhow, he neglected her, and she was threatened with poverty. At that moment she determined to go over to the other side and tell her secret; or else, what was equally likely, she determined to strike a blow in Philip's interest, and therefore in her own, by obtaining the Ravendale wealth for him. Then she could levy what blackmail she liked on what was virtually her gift.

She was a woman of sordid soul, one who, by her own confession, had not scrupled to countenance fraud whilst there was no danger to herself in so doing.

She had been guilty of nothing less than compounding a felony, Philip Ravendale's pretensions to his name and to the right of inheritance being felony pure and simple.

Was it not likely that so unscrupulous a woman as this showed Mrs. Vance to be, would not hesitate to commit other and greater crimes?

As yet, of course, Frieker had no proof even that what Mrs. Vance told him was the truth. When he had somewhat recovered from the astonishment her words had produced in him, he told her plainly that he would require proof of them.

"You can prove the thing for yourself if I give you as near as I can the dates of the

marriage, and of the birth and where they took place."

"Very well."

"Perhaps you'd like to hear the whole story?" suggested Mrs. Vance.

Now that she had told the gist of the matter, she was not averse to giving all the details.

"I should like it above all things."

"Then put that nasty warrant into your pocket again. The sight of it annoys me."

When the obnoxious paper was hidden away she folded her hands complacently, and began her narrative, which was as follows:—

"My maiden name was Vance. My father was a stage carpenter here in London. My mother died when I was a child, and I don't remember her. I was about seventeen when I lost my father too, he was killed by a fall when fixing some fly-lights. The manager of the theatre at which he worked being willing to do something for me in compensation, gave me employment as a dresser to the actors. That was in the year thirty-seven or thereabouts."

"I had been dresser for about a year when a new actress was engaged as leading lady; this was Miss Adelaide Rivers. She was very beautiful, and a clever actress. Her Juliet was reckoned the best that had ever been. I admired her very much, and the greatest wish of my heart was to become her dresser, of which I saw no chance, as she had her own maid, a middle-aged woman, whom I secretly hated."

"I used to watch for Miss Rivers coming in at the stage door. It was nearly the only chance I had of getting a look at her, I was kept so busy during the evening."

"One evening when I was standing there she came alone without her maid, and I overheard her tell the manager she had had to turn the woman away for drinking, and would he lend her a dresser for the evening. I stepped forward and offered myself."

"I suppose you'll do as well as another," she said.

"I will do my best," I said.

"I did my best, and I pleased Miss Rivers, and she took me into her service."

"It was not possible that so beautiful and clever a lady should not attract lovers. They came about her in scores; but she cared for none of them, and I believe she led a perfectly honest and upright life till Colonel Ravendale came upon the scene."

"He was Sir Richard's father; he never held the title for his father outlived him. I did not know his real name in those days nor for many a day after."

"Miss Rivers always spoke of him as Mr. Dale, and whether she knew his rightful name or not at that time I don't know."

"She was a good mistress, but she kept her own counsel. I didn't even know where he lived nor anything, though I tried to find out, thinking it might be useful to know."

"I see," interrupted Frieker at this point, "you always had an eye to business."

Mrs. Vance took no notice of the remark and went on.

"One morning after he had been to supper with Miss Rivers I found a gentleman's seal ring on the stairs. I picked it up and kept it thinking I might find out by the crest on it who Mr. Dale was."

"H'm! You would have made a fine detective," remarked Frieker, with genuine admiration for the woman's far-sightedness.

Mrs. Vance tossed her head in disdain at this compliment.

"The end of it was Miss Rivers had a son."

"Where was she living at that time?" asked the detective.

"In Soho-square."

Frieker made a mental note of this, intending to hunt up the register of births for the district in which Soho square was situated.

"And can you tell me the date of the birth?"

"Not the exact date. It was in January

or February, forty-one. Miss Rivers believed Mr. Dale to be a married man, but shortly after the birth of her child she discovered somehow that his wife had died a year before."

"She made a great row, and threatened to expose him if he did not marry her at once. He agreed to this, and they went to Mereham, and I went with them as the child's nurse."

"When they had been about a month at Mereham they were quietly married there in the little church—I forget the name of it—it is a little way out of the town. After that we all went to Paris."

"They lived very happily together. I did not know that Mr. Dale, as I thought he was called, had another son by his first wife."

"In Paris I had a lover, a Frenchman, a mechanic by trade. One day—I suppose they were four years married by this time—I had a holiday. I went with my Jacques into the country."

"When I came back to the Dales' apartment at night I found that they had gone away. They had left me no word—nothing by which I might find them again—only a little money wrapped in a paper with my name on it, and underneath was written, 'A farewell from little Philip.'"

"I did not try to find them again; it would have been useless. Jacques married me and died before a year was out. I came back to England, and went back to my old occupation at the theatre. I tried to find out if anything was known of the beautiful actress who had once been so popular. Nobody knew anything and nobody cared. Adelaide Rivers was almost forgotten."

"After a time I married again, and again after some years I was left a widow with nothing for the support of myself and my child Priscilla. Read had been a hard drinker, and all we had went to the gin-shop—it was drink killed him. I thought of the Dales, and how they might help me in some way. I had kept Mr. Dale's ring all those years, and I took it to Wyom's, the engravers, in Regent-street, and asked there if they could tell me whose the ring was. They were suspicious of me. It was a heavy, handsome ring, and I was badly dressed. 'I haven't stolen it,' I said, 'I found it, and I want to give it back to its owner, and I thought you might tell me what I wanted to know.'"

"I left the ring with them, and called back in a few days. They had found out that the crest belonged to the Ravendale family of Ravendale Hall, Cheselden, near Chorlton. I went there and made inquiries about the Ravendales to see if they were the same as the Dales; and by the description I got of Colonel Ravendale, who had died about three years before, I guessed that he was Mr. Dale. He had married twice, I was told. The second wife was a lady he had met abroad, so he said. She had been very beautiful, but she, too, was dead—had died some years before. This, of course, was Miss Rivers."

"The old baronet, Colonel Ravendale's father, had outlived his son by a month only, and Colonel Ravendale's son by his first wife was now the head of the family."

"He had had a son by his second wife too—Mr. Philip Ravendale. Philip—that I remembered was the name of the child I had nursed—the child born before his mother and father were married. The story wasn't known, I soon discovered that; but I knew it, and I thought I might turn my knowledge to good account."

"This Philip Ravendale was living in London. He had the reputation of being very wild, and he was doing his best to make ducks and drakes of the money his father had left him."

"Here was my game, I thought. Not the elder brother to whom the secret would make no difference, but the younger to whom the secret meant, if not kept, loss of everything except life. He should pay me or be known for what he was—a bastard."

"It all turned out as I intended it should. Philip was glad enough to buy my silence, and

with it his name and his money, and, though I didn't know it at the time, his claim to inherit all on his brother's death. Sir Richard had been jilted, and had sworn never to marry, and so Philip was the heir, if I chose.

"On the whole he paid me my allowances of a hundred a year pretty regularly, sometimes giving me two years at once when he happened to be flush. Within the last two or three years, however, things have been going from bad to worse with him.

"Sir Richard was tired of paying his debts, and refused to have anything to say to him, and I began to think it was hardly worth my while keeping up with him; I might make more by selling my secret.

"Still I gave him time, always keeping in mind that some day he would be the heir. One day last summer he came to see me; he was in high spirits. 'I've got the chance of a fortune,' he said. 'A fortune!' I exclaimed.

"My brother has written to me to say he has found a wife for me—a wife with twenty thousand pounds."

"And you're going to marry her?" I asked.

"Of course. I'm going to Ravensdale Hall next week to begin the love-making," said he.

"But you haven't even seen her!" I replied.

"Oh, that doesn't matter; if she was as ugly as sin I'd have her; she's got twenty thousand!"

"Suppose she won't have you?" I suggested.

"Oh that'll be all right," he said. "She's only eighteen, and not many dare go contrary to Sir Richard when he sets his mind on anything. He has set his mind on this, and so have I."

"Very well," said I. "I suppose you mean me to wait till you're married before you pay me!"

"Exactly. I'll give you a hundred down when I'm married, honour bright, and that will be before the year's out."

"I give you just six months," said I; "that'll be till the end of January—a month in—and if you don't square me by that time I'll peach!" and I meant what I said.

"You see I doubted him; he had so often put me off of late with hopes and promises that I was tiring of the game. I determined to find out if this was genuine and not an excuse to keep me quiet for a while longer. I went down to Chorlton, and took Mrs. Binks's rooms. That was last August.

"One day I walked over to Ravensdale, and got into talk with the gate woman. While I was standing there talking, a young lady and a young man come round a corner a little way along the road. He had his arm linked in hers, and was looking down at her in such a way that I couldn't help seeing they were lovers. They were all put about when they saw me and the gate woman staring at them."

"I remarked, when they had gone in at the gate, that there was some sweethearts going on there, and I asked who they were. The woman told me it was Mr. Arthur Wyndham, the tutor, and Miss Norah Blake, Sir Richard's ward. It was the same young lady Mr. Philip had told me he was going to marry, and I was certain he was deceiving me.

"I determined to get my daughter, Priscilla, into the house that she might keep an eye upon Mr. Philip. There was an under-housemaid wanting, and she took the place, though she had been upper in Grosvenor square. I called myself and her Vance so that Mr. Philip mightn't be able to find out I had set a watch on him; he knew me by the name of Read, and he had never seen Priscilla.

"Priscilla soon found out that the love-making was going on, on one side at all events—Mr. Philip's—so I thought it fair to him to have patience. I had some money saved, and I lived on it till after Christmas, then it began to run out, and Priscilla had to help me. I got into debt, my rent was owing, and I hadn't enough to eat. I wrote to Mr. Philip, more than once, and I reminded him that the

time was nearly up; he took no notice of my letters.

On Sunday, the first of February, Priscilla came over to see me as usual. She had asked the housekeeper to advance her wages, and the housekeeper had refused. She told me, too, that Philip Ravensdale had gone to London the day before and that of his own free will he had given up the courtship of Miss Blake.

"Priscilla did not know my secret—she has heard it for the first time with yourself—but she did know I was anxious that this marriage should take place, and she managed to be present at an interview between Miss Blake and Mr. Philip. She had got a hint of what was going on from Miss Blake's maid who had been entrusted by Mr. Philip to bring about an interview.

"Priscilla hid herself in the room somewhere, and heard the whole thing, as she'd tell you herself if she wasn't crying, I daresay."

"Yes," Priscilla managed to say between her sobs, "it's all—t—t—true."

"Philip told Miss Blake he wouldn't marry her," went on Mrs. Vance, "and Miss Blake copped that with the confession that she intended to marry Mr. Wyndham, to whom she had been secretly engaged for months. I knew about the lady in St. John's Wood, and I suspected that it was because of something about her that Mr. Philip had changed so suddenly. I saw that the game was up as far as he was concerned, that I had no chance of more money out of him, and that there was a chance of Sir Richard paying me for a secret concerning the family so much. I was almost in beggary, and I could not afford to let the chance go. I planned the visit with Priscilla, who was to be on the look-out for me the next evening at six o'clock, and was to find out if the coast was clear. When I arrived she told me I couldn't see Sir Richard as Mr. Wyndham was with him. I had met Mr. Wyndham, however, on my way to the house; Priscilla hadn't seen him go out."

"You knew this all the time and you never made an attempt to save Mr. Wyndham?"

"I wouldn't have let him hang, if you mean that. Philip Ravensdale wasn't worth that, well—that's all. You know the rest," finished Mrs. Vance.

"Or I shall know it? Of course, as you say, I can prove your story."

"And you will?"

"And I will."

"And when you find I have told the truth so far you'll believe the rest?"

"Perhaps," said Fricker, not very cordially.

"Look here, Mr. Fricker," said Mrs. Vance, suddenly, "I suppose you're not a fool?"

"I suppose not. I've never been taken for one," was the dry answer.

"Then if you've any brains, set them working to find out what motive I could have for murdering Sir Richard Ravensdale."

"I have found out the motive already."

"What?"

"You probably did it to give Philip the money so that he could pay you. One for him and two for yourself?"

"I wish to Heaven I hadn't kept that ring!" exclaimed Mrs. Vance, moved out of her composure for the first time.

As for Priscilla her grief was terrible to witness.

Fricker was not particularly affected by the emotion of either woman.

"No, the ring wasn't yours," he said, "You stole it, if it comes to that, and one bad action produces a thousand others. Now that you've told me what went before the murder, perhaps you'll tell me what happened after. Why did Sir Philip visit you on Wednesday, for instance?"

"Because whenever I knew that what I took for a swoon was death I saw that the luck was all his way, again, and I wrote and reminded him that his inheritance of the title and estate depended on me, and that I was in want. On Wednesday he had business in

Chorlton, and he looked in upon me and gave me a cheque for twenty pounds. He said he could give no more till the will was proved, though, of course, the bank had placed money at his disposal in the meantime."

"He paid you by cheque?" interrupted Fricker.

"Yes."

"And signed it in your room?"

"Yes."

"And the cheque was payable to Mary Ann Read or Bearer?"

"Yes. How do you know?"

"I have seen that cheque."

"No, you're no fool!" commented Mrs. Vance. Then she went on, "The next thing that occurred was when Priscilla ran home on Thursday night and told me of the discovery at the Hall, and accused me, her own mother, of the crime."

There was something very like a sob in Mrs. Vance's voice as she said this.

"I suppose it was natural. She knew of my visit at the very time of the death, but it was hard to bear. I gave in to her about leaving Chorlton at once; I saw the danger myself. When I came here I let Mr. Philip know where I was; for his own sake I knew he wouldn't tell where I was. How you have found me I cannot imagine, but now that you've got all you want, I suppose you'll leave me in peace?"

"I'll leave you in peace at all events till I find out about that marriage," said Fricker, rising.

"And then?"

"Then I'll find out who murdered Sir Richard Ravensdale."

"He wasn't murdered," was Mrs. Vance's last assertion.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WINDINGS OF THE MARE.

FRICKER lost no time in seeking to verify Mrs. Vance's information. One portion of it at all events he found true; namely, the date of Philip Ravensdale's birth. By hunting up an old register of births for the district of Soho, he found the date to be January 25th, 1841. But this in itself was valueless, except as taken in connection with the date of the marriage, which Mrs. Vance declared took place three months later, and on the verification of this statement, a great deal now depended, perhaps even the fate of Mrs. Vance herself.

Should it turn out to be true, Fricker felt that he would be obliged to own Mrs. Vance a reliable person, one whose word could be depended upon, seeing that she had told a story implicating herself in no small degree, and having spoken the truth so far, might it not be inferred that she spoke the truth in the account she gave of Sir Richard Ravensdale's sudden death?

Fricker almost hoped that the whole story was a hoax—told by the woman for purposes of her own, probably to gain time. In that case he would not have far to look for the murderer; should it, on the other hand, prove to be as she said, although showing that Sir Philip was an impostor and a cheat, it would not show who was answerable for that other crime.

"It'll be a trial for felony and not a trial for murder after all," thought Fricker, with disgust. The one, however extraordinary the circumstances connected with it, was decidedly tame compared to the other. A tiger having once tasted human flesh cares for no other. Fricker had all along supposed that the matter concerned human life and human blood, and to find it concerned only acres and thousands and a title was insipid.

He had no proof that Mrs. Vance was the criminal; she was the last person that saw Sir Richard alive—nay, more, she confessed to having seen him lying there on the floor senseless, according to her account, dead as it was found. She had also confessed to having stolen away from the house unseen by any.

one, using the window as a means of exit. There the evidence against her, which was all of her own telling, ended; the rest must be determined by a careful consideration of circumstances.

In circumstantial evidence, motive is necessarily the pivot on which the greater part of it turns, and in Mrs. Vance's case the motive was somewhat weak and far-fetched. Either she had taken Sir Richard's life in a fit of anger, because he had refused to buy her secret—a supposition that would change the crime from murder to manslaughter, or she had deliberately gone to Ravendale Hall to slay its master, that the Ravendale gold might be in the hands of Paillip whose partner in fraud she had been for years.

Nothing definite could be arrived at, however, till Fricker had followed the windings of the maze into which Mrs. Vance's story led him. Not wishing to entrust so important a piece of business into the hands of a subordinate, and being, indeed, too impatient to brook the delay of even the few hours that would elapse between the discovery of what he wished to know by another and the transmission of that intelligence to himself, Fricker went in person to Mereham to inspect the marriage-register.

There was nothing to be done in the meantime in London that could not be done without him; he left instructions to keep a strict watch over the Vances, and prevent any attempt at escape. Mrs. Vance had bade him go to Mereham, and see for himself the truth of her story; was that a mere ruse to get him out of the way that she might elude him? If so, it was futile, for no less than four plain-clothes officers from Scotland Yard took note of her goings-out and comings-in, and watched the house 6, Islington-crescent day and night.

Having no further need to conceal her whereabouts, she no longer confined herself within its walls; but her expeditions never seemed to have any deeper object than the purchase of a quarter of tea, or a chump chop, or such small necessities of life as she was in need of, and which her landlady had provided previous to her discovery by the police.

When Fricker reached Mereham, he at once ferreted out the sacristan of the church in which the marriage took place, if Mrs. Vance spoke the truth. On hearing the detective's request, the old man made a wry face, and looked doubtfully at the shilling with which the request was accompanied.

"I baint allowed to show the marriage-register," he said, shaking his head, "and I never go agin orders."

"Here's another shilling for you, my man, I must see the marriage-register."

At that word must the man looked yet more doubtfully at the silver in his palm, and shook his head yet more vigorously.

"I can't do it," he repeated.

"Either this man is not to be corrupted by filthy lucre," thought Fricker, "or else he wants more," and as he held the shillings in his hand, and made no attempt to return them, the latter theory seemed likely to be true.

The marriage register was worth a golden key, so Fricker produced half-a-sovereign, and at sight of it the old man's scruples vanished as do clouds before the golden rays of the sun.

"I'll show it to you, if you'll not say nothink about it," he added, by way of acting up to his previous unwillingness.

"Greedy old soundrall!" was Fricker's mental comment.

"Which year would you be a-wantin'?" inquired the sacristan when they were in the vestry.

"Eighteen-forty and forty-one."

The man took his keys, and was on the point of opening a painted deal press, when he turned round suddenly, and asked,—

"You're nothink to the gentleman that was here last week, I suppose?"

"No, nothing. Be quick, I'm in a hurry."

"I thought you might be, as you want the very same years," remarked the sacristan, blandly.

There was just a chance of further remuneration, and he thought it politic to be civil to a gentleman who given had him twelve shillings; the seam of gold might not be exhausted yet, and it was well to keep the shaft in working order.

Paillip Ravendale was born in January, 1841, and Mrs. Vance declared that the marriage took place three months later. That would make it April or perhaps May, as the birth had been at the end of January, and Mrs. Vance said "about three months."

Fricker looked rapidly through the entries for April and May without finding what he wanted. Willing to allow still further latitude as to dates, he searched in March and June, then commencing at February he examined all the entries down to the end of the year. It was not there.

"She has sent me on a fool's errand," he said to himself, "and she has been a fool for her pains."

He was looking vaguely at one of the pages of April entries, the edge held in his hand ready to turn it over, as it were. He felt angry at being thus fooled by this woman, and his anger was in some degree communicated to his fingers. He turned the page over too roughly, and behold! it came out in his grasp. The sacristan looked alarmed.

"Mind what you're doing, sir," he remarked.

"What a d— rotten old book," said Fricker, testily.

"Small shame to it, and it more than forty year old."

Fricker fixed the page in again as neatly and closely as possible, and it struck him that the paper seemed pretty thick, and that it was odd that it should tear so easily.

"I wonder if the marriage took place here even," he mused. "I'll just have a look at the year before," and he turned back to the entries of 1840, commencing at January.

Yes, there sure enough was the very thing, he had been hunting for—the certificate of marriage between Richard Ravendale, widower, and Adelaide Rivers, spinster, both described as "of this parish," and the date of it was April 5th, 1840, a year earlier than he had expected to find it, and nearly ten months before the birth of Sir Philip Ravendale.

And Mrs. Vance had tried to bamboozle the cleverest detective in London with this fable of his illegitimacy!

Fricker couldn't repress a smile when he thought what a stupendous hoax the whole story was; well put together, too, so well that he had very nearly been deceived into belief in the woman's veracity; nearly, but not quite. He never put faith in anything without testimony the most conclusive.

He tipped up the ponderous book on the table before him to have a good look at this piece of testimony, and the instant he took the edge of the page in his fingers it also came out.

"Another one!" he exclaimed, "and it wasn't my fault, you saw that for yourself. I hardly touched it."

"I never know'd they was loose like that. Well, I suppose," continued the sacristan, with a sigh of philosophic resignation, "well, I suppose age begins to show something. We can't always be young, as I tell my old woman."

"No," replied Fricker, slowly, and in an absent kind of way. "We can't always be—"

What was there about that page that made him stare so intently?

"Can't always be young," he wound up quickly. He rose suddenly and went over to the window, taking the page in his hand.

"You see, sir, she gets the rheumatiz awful bad in her joints, and she keeps blaming the roof, and telling me as I ought to be at the rector for new tiles. But it's nothing to do

with the house, which is dry enough, excepting for a little rain that comes in at one corner when it rains heavy. Its just that she's not as young as she was when I married her forty years ago, come next—"

"Has anyone else been at this book looking at it, or—anything?" broke in Fricker, cutting short the old man's reminiscences.

"There hasn't been anyone asking to see that book till last week as long as I can remember, which made me think that you might be something to the gentleman as—"

"This gentleman—what was he like?"

"A pleasant-spoken gentleman as ever I see—a real gentleman," which assertion explained the old man's greed.

The market had been spoiled by the last visitor, who had doubtless impressed the sacristan with his worth, and the value of a peep into the marriage-register in a pretty substantial way, and had answered favourably to the one test by which the lower classes prove one's claim to the title of "gentleman."

"But what was he like—his face? Was he dark and tall and—?" began the detective, impatiently.

"That's him exactly, and a kind-hearted gentleman, too, as I saw when the lady fainted."

"What lady fainted?"

"Well, it was this way, sir. When we came through the churchyard outside there was a lady walking about, reading the stones—a handsome lady she was, too. I came in here with the gentleman to get him that very book that you have before you. He said he wanted to copy out something he had seen the day before."

"Oh! he had been here before?"

"Yes, sir, the day before. This second day he brought ink and paper, and he was in the middle of writing it out when there was a kind of a cry, and someone calling for help. 'Go, you,' he said to me, 'and come back for me if there's anything wrong.' I went and found the lady lying on the grass as if she had fallen. She said she thought she was going to faint, and she looked very ill, and as white as a sheet. I was going back into the vestry for water, but she begged me like a child not to leave her and took me by the wrists, and held me for fear of being left alone, and after a while the gentleman came out, and offered to give any help or go for water. But by that time, she was better and said she would go home, and then the gentleman said he would see her safe home, which was kind of him, seeing he had to catch a train in an hour's time, so he told me; but he never thought of himself when it came to helping the lady."

"Was she tall and fair-haired, and with dark eyes?" inquired the detective, thinking of a vision of a woman he had once seen standing behind the footlights of the "Folly" theatre, smiling and kissing her hand to the admiring multitude that applauded her feats of daring.

"Such dark eyes as I never saw the likes of before, and her hair like gold, and that's a fact."

Fricker had not much doubt in his mind as to who the lady and gentleman were, nor how it happened that the final cypher of that 1840 had rather an odd look about it, as if indeed the writer had first written the figure one, and had afterwards changed it to a nought, nor that the loosening of the two pages was not due to age, but to their having been deliberately torn out, one of them at least, the other was then made loose in consequence.

The book was an octavo—that is to say, the paper had been folded in eight, each eighth going to a page and having another eighth attached to it. If one page was torn out another was necessarily left loose.

Fricker easily found that the page containing the entry of Colonel Ravendale's marriage with Miss Rivers had been torn from that section of the book in which April 5th would occur in the year 1841.

He counted the pages in the section, and

found seven, including the one that had first come out in his hand; the all-important page on which the date of the year had been tampered with was, therefore, the eighth, and had been detached from the other loose ones.

Still going further for proof, he turned to the section in which he had found it; there were eight without it. It was an interloper, and had been put there.

"It is clumsily done," thought Fricker, forgetting that he had very nearly been deceived. "I gave Philip Ravendale credit for more cleverness than this."

All this while the sacristan had been regarding Fricker in silence, and with some impatience, as he watched him count the pages.

"There will surely be another half sovereign for this," thought he.

At last Fricker shut the book, leaving the pages as he had found them.

"This book has been tampered with," he said.

The sacristan threw up his hands in astonishment.

"You will be required to identify the gentleman who was here last week. Can you do so?"

"Yes."

"And the lady that fainted—would you know her again?"

"That I would, sir. But what has she got to do with it? She wasn't in here; she was a stranger to the gentleman."

"She was his wife, and they were here on their honeymoon."

(To be continued.)

In Minnesota the women go out at night with large sheets of white paper and pots of paste. They use these to cover up the theatrical posters which show any female figure in tights. This is a protest against the failure of a bill brought in last year, which would have made it illegal for any woman to appear in tights upon the stage. The ladies of that state call the leg of a piano a "limb," and use the same word in referring to the legs of chairs and tables. But they do not object, as did the women of a state farther West, to the fine collection of statuary which adorns the public library. The figures are left undraped. In the Western state referred to Mercury was garbed in a suit of pyjamas, and Venus robed in a dressing-gown, while Cupid played at her feet with a little pair of trousers drawn up over his chubby limbs. These modest additions created so much amusement in the circles where art had been better cultivated that they finally led to the dispersion of the collection of statuary.

The Dutch boatman will count the pipes he smokes between one point and another as he creeps along his canal, and will tell you with great nicety what distance he has made. Similarly the hillmen of Assam will measure the ground they run over by keeping count of the number of quids of tobacco they get through as they go. In many parts of the world one may meet with Roman Catholic priests who will measure small periods of time by going through some religious exercise. They will, for instance, allow their tea to draw while they repeat a *misere* very slowly, just as in the Rhine provinces the peasants will boil an egg, or perform any other little operation of the kind, while they can repeat the Lord's Prayer. Dr. Doran, in describing the meeting of our fugitive James II. with Louis XIV. at St. Germain's, gives another illustration of this same mode of measurement before the days of chronometers. James bowed himself as near the ground as he could, we are told, and came crouching towards his host, who, on his part anxious to show the fallen Monarch every courtesy, bowed down equally low, and advanced to meet him in this ridiculous posture. And so the two men met each other, and kissed and exchanged courtesies "for the space of a Paternoster."

GINGERBREAD BAROMETER.

A CLEVER Frenchman who has original ideas on most subjects employs a kind of barometer which may safely be called unique. It is nothing more nor less than the figure of a general made of gingerbread. He buys it every year at the Place du Throne, takes it home and hangs it by a string on a nail.

Gingerbread, as every one knows, is easily affected by changes in the atmosphere. The slightest moisture renders it soft; in dry weather, on the contrary, it grows hard and tough.

Every morning, on going out, the Frenchman asks his servant, "What does the general say?" and the man applies his thumb to the gingerbread figure.

Sometimes he replies: "The general feels flabby about the chest; he would advise your taking an umbrella." On the other hand, when the general's symptoms are "hard and unyielding," the Frenchman sallies forth arrayed in his best, with no fears for his spotless suit or his new hat. He says the general has so far never proved unworthy of the confidence placed in his prognostications.

GRADING TEA IN JAPAN.

TEA SORTING is one of the common occupations of young girls in the tea-farming districts of Japan. They carefully pick out all the seeds, weeds, bits of bark and other rubbish that unavoidably fall into the baskets during the picking. The sorting is done after the tea-leaves have been fired; that is, dried by being placed in a tray, with a stout paper bottom, and shaken over a charcoal fire for a time, and then placed on the top of an oven built for the purpose, when the drying operatives twist the leaves by hand. The pickers, beside taking out the rubbish, in many cases sort the leaves into different grades, the better qualities being taken out and sold at very remunerative prices. The Japanese teas are divided into eight grades, but unfortunately the best of them are not sent to the United Kingdom.

After the tea has been dried and is ready for picking, it is carefully sifted, and then packed in lead-lined chests and in caddies. The dust from the sifting is saved, and large quantities of it are sent to America every year. It is sold much cheaper than the perfect tea. The dust only costs from twopence halfpenny to fivepence a pound wholesale, and by careful admixture with good tea can be made to retail at four shillings.

TYPEWRITING.

Few people know the amount of manual labour involved in a day's typewriting, or realize the distance the hands travel in a day's work. Probably few of the typewriters themselves appreciate it. Yet their hands cover a distant they would never think of covering with their legs unless necessity compelled it.

The highest rate of speed ever attained is two hundred words a minute. This is supposed to be the result of the most rapid movements the human hands are capable of. The person making this record maintained this speed for only four consecutive minutes, and has never been able to exceed that limit. Assuming the words would average six letters a-piece, twelve hundred letters a minute were written. It is estimated that to make each letter the fingers are raised a height of two inches from the keyboard. Two inches added, for the descending movement, make the fingers travel four inches before each letter is struck. So this expert's hand in writing these two hundred words travelled forty-eight hundred inches, or four hundred feet, during the minute in which she wrote two hundred words.

But this is unusual, of course. Very rapid writing is a speed of seventy-five words a minute, and this rate is too fast for comfort.

Practical work is ten pages of legal paper an hour. Each page contains three hundred words. Six hours' steady writing can be regarded as an entire day's work. This is a speed of fifty words a minute, and the practical worker writes during the day sixty pages—eighteen thousand words, or one hundred and eighty thousand letters. If her finger travels four inches to make each letter, during the day it travels four hundred and thirty-two thousand inches. This provides for the perpendicular movement only, and it is fair to increase this distance by one-third to estimate the distance the hands travel over the keyboard in a horizontal direction. The total sum in inches is five hundred and seventy-six thousand. This is equivalent to forty-eight thousand feet, or a little over nine miles a day. In a week the hands can cover fifty-four miles, and in a year's steady application to business over twenty-eight hundred miles.

In the hope of making an end of the rabbit plague in Australia, there is a proposal to import the carpet snake, which is fifteen feet long, and swallows six rabbits at a meal. After devouring all the rabbits, the snakes, it is said, would proceed to devour each other.

The bell that will ring the hours from the steeple of the college church at Notre Dame, Ind., is said to be the largest on the continent. Eight men can easily stand erect within it, and its tones can be distinctly heard a distance of twelve miles.

It has been proved that alcohol is not a food, but a poison. It enters the stomach as alcohol, passes through the system as alcohol unchanged, is found in the tissues and brain after death as alcohol, and will burn as alcohol then. It is not converted into tissue-building or blood-making, and not assimilated anywhere in the system as food.

A MACHINE for taking fish by the wholesale is employed in North Carolina. It is called a "fish wheel," and is worked like an ordinary water wheel, by a narrow stream that is permitted to give outlet to a dammed stream. But it is so constructed that in revolving it picks up all the fish that pass through, and throws them into a great box.

LIME WATER has a tendency to make children grow, and in countries where the drinking-water is heavily impregnated with it, the men are apt to be tall. It is now used very extensively in the milk for children; but it should not be restricted to children. For a perfect sanitary diet alkaline water is needed for every person who eats heavily of meat; and this means nearly everybody excepting the vegetarians.

An excellent plan suggested by a writer in the *Christian Union* is worthy of general attention in towns and small villages where hospitals are unknown. An association, fittingly called the "Samaritan Association," secures for free loan among the sick such articles as reclining chairs, back rests, bandages, lint, bed-tables, air-cushions, ice caps, crutches, hot-water bags, and other supplies. These are not loaned in cases of contagious disease, and a written order from an attending physician must accompany the request for a loan.

LOUIS KOSSUTH who is living in Turin, is ninety years of age. Several of his fellow-countrymen visited him recently. They found him not only in good health, but taking a keen interest in everything going on in Hungary. Kossuth complained of weakened eyesight, but his voice was as sonorous and powerful as in the distant years when his eloquence charmed his hearers in England and America. When the subject of his return to his native country was mentioned by one of his visitors, he burst into tears. To the same guest, who on taking leave wished that he might enjoy good health and a prolonged life, he replied, "I thank you for the first wish; but to desire me to live very much longer is hardly a kindness."

FACETIÆ.

"Time gallops under the spur of the moment."

"No wonder the minutes fly so fast—they are making up time."

A woman who knows says, "It is hard to respect a man whose stockings you deem."

"FAITH" was described by an Ohio boy as "expecting something ye ain't goin' to git."

A MAN never knows what he can do until he tries, and then he is often sorry he found out.

ONE of the things that is not faithful to the end is a cheap cigar.

MAN is like a glass of beer. Blowing the top off his head settles him.

THE man who always volunteers his opinion has few opinions worth listening to.

THE quality of mercy may not be strained, but it frequently manages somehow to get exceedingly thin.

WOMAN is a greedy creature. She robbed man of a rib at the outset of her career, and she has been after his heart ever since.

"I BOUGHT these three-dollar trousers in a fit of economy," Hunker (surveying the garment): "I don't see the fit."

IT is not every bicycle rider who can lower the record, but it is a poor bicycle that cannot lower the rider.

THE woman who blames herself for a man's misdeeds is apt to find him cheerfully acquiescing in her views.

SHE: "You ought to be ashamed of stealing a kiss." HE: "You are equally guilty. You received the stolen goods."

"THAT cigar you smoke has its advantages," "Like it?" "No; that's just it. A friend doesn't feel hurt if you don't offer him one."

THERE is a tide in the affairs of men which, if not skillfully dodged at the proper time, drowns them.

A CERTAIN man when asked to give his three favourite qualities in women said: "Grace, grace, grace."

IT handwriting is an index to character; some ladies of the present day ought to be afraid to be left alone with themselves.

THE man who has sworn off profanity should spend a few minutes in meditation before removing a porous plaster.

HIS lordship: "So she says I am a wisened up little apology for a man?" SHE: "Yes; but I have accepted the apology."

"TEN lifetimes," says a writer, "will not suffice to solve the enigma, woman." Indeed that is so; and yet we must not give her up.

A RESPECTABLE man may wear a threadbare coat, but if he does so he will find very few people who will believe in his respectability.

SHAKESPEARE speaks of sermons in the stones. Now I understand why women pay so much attention to one another's jewels when in church.

PHOTOGRAPHER (mechanically): "Now look pleasant, please." (With agitation): "Oh, don't smile quite so much; I have only a small plate in the camera."

PATIENT: "Then, doctor, you do not feel any anxiety regarding my case?" "Not at all. If I did I would ask you to settle the bill at once."

SHE (enthusiastically): "Oh, George, don't you think the greatest joy in life is the pursuit of the good, the true and the beautiful?" HE: "That's what I'm here for."

"Does your pastor permit himself to make jokes in the pulpit?" said one lady to another. "Oh, yes!" was the answer, in an apologetic tone; "but they are never very good ones."

WIFE: "Dear, what does this mean in the paper where it says the court will be drunk standing?" Husband (experienced): "That means, darling, that that particular court comes early in the evening."

"It would be a great deal better for yez, Mickey," said Mr. Dolan; "if yez 'ud pay more attention to gettin' yer shoes blacked instead as yer eyes."

"A MAN," says a sorely-ried father, "never fully realises the wealth of information he doesn't possess till his first child begins to ask questions."

HOUSEMAID: "Is your sweetheart a good-lookin' young man, Jane?" Cook: "I don't know, Mary. He's a sweep, and I've never seen him with his face washed yet."

"I AM satisfied that the habit of borrowing money in time gets to be a disease." "Is it ever fatal?" "Certainly; didn't you ever stumble upon a dead beat?"

ORNITHOLOGY. — School-teacher: "What little boy can tell me where is the home of the swallow?" Bobby: "I kin." "Well, Bobby?" "The home of the swallow is the stummick."

"A DROP of ink may make a million think," said Byron. Yes; and it is apt to make one woman think enough for the other 999,999 when that same drop ornaments her carpet.

MRS. FLANJACK: "You have been flirting with my daughter, and last night you even went so far as to kiss her. Now, I want to know what are your intentions. Boarder: "My intentions are never to do so again."

WHAT IT WAS ABOUT.—Neighbour: "What is all that crying about over at your place?" Johnny Peasbrow: "Willie pulled down a jug of treacle on himself in the pantry this morning, and me is coming his hair."

MAGISTRATE (to prisoner): "You certainly effected the robbery in a masterly way—indeed, with quite exceptional cunning." Prisoner (deprecatingly): "No flattery, your honour, if your please—no flattery!"

SCHREIBER: "I lent the editor my umbrella a few days ago, as he forgot his and it looked like rain." Tomson: "How he returned it yet?" Schreiber (sadly): "No, but he will; he returns everything of mine."

MRS. McCARLEN: "That piano lamp ye sold me is no good, an' Oi want yez to take it back." Dealer: "Eh? Why?" Mrs. McCARLEN: "Divil a chune son we git out av it."

A VISUAL FAILING.—"I tried to get your father to endorse a small note for me to-day," said Mr. Hojack to his wife, "but he couldn't see it." "Poor papa has become quite near-sighted lately," replied Mrs. Hojack.

FARMER MEDDERGRASS: "Be you a lawyer, sir?" Blackstone (with dignity): "I am practising law, sir." Meddergrass (moving away): "I thought, maybe you'd got the trade larned. I'll go to somebody else."

ANNULATED.—He (feeling his way to a knowledge of her accomplishments): "Can you darn stockings, Arabella?" She (with distant frigidity): "I don't expect to marry a man who needs to wear darned stockings."

"I SAW a conjurer last night who could give you two kinds of drink out of the same bottle." "That's nothing, my boy. We've a grocer in our street who can sell you three different kinds of tea out of the same box."

A GENTLEMAN travelling in the Isle of Wight on horseback suddenly drew up, and inquired of a country lad: "Is this the way to Ryde, my boy?" "No," replied the urchin; "took in yer 'bels an' stick yer knees out more."

RACE FOR THE MEZER.—Wishlets: "Is young Arthur Amley still paying his addresses to your daughter?" Diablets: "Yes, they have progressed to the stage where the gas bill has ceased being a source of worryment to me."

THE flames were burning fiercely, and the firemen were dissecting one stream of water on the piano in the parlour. "Look here," called out the chief, "this is no time to play on the piano. Turn your face on the house itself."

HE: "Do you still feel angry with me?" SHE: "I despise you! I abhor you! I hate you!" HE: "Then perhaps you'd better break your engagement to accompany me to the opera." SHE: "Oh, I don't hate you so much as that."

DOLLEY: "Well, old fellow, I asked Miss Amy last night to marry me, and she declined." Goslin: "Did she deliberate, as though hesitating to pain you?" Dolley: "No; she prodded her negative by the instantaneous process."

FRIEND: "After your experience in the Hotel Royal fire, I shouldn't think you'd want to go to the Hotel Rattletrap. It's just as dangerous." Miss Spinster: "You should have seen the handsome firemen that carried me out."

HER POSITION.—Nellie: "I congratulate you, dear! Was it an orthodox proposal—down on his knees, and all that?" Fanny (blushing): "Not just that way, dear. I—I believe I was on his knees. But don't ever dare to mention it."

MRS. STOUTER: "You didn't use to puff and growl when I asked you to put my slipper on before we were married." Stouter: "No; but you forget that while your foot has grown three sizes larger, you still wear the same size slipper."

"HAVE you seen the new camel, George?" she asked, as she glanced at him keenly. "Yes," he answered. "Then," she said, firmly, "our engagement is at an end." "Why?" he asked. "Because that camel is visible only during the hours that immediately precede daylight."

PROFESSOR: "How could anyone write such flat verses?" Popular Author: "I don't agree with you, sir. I ought to say that the words are mine." "Oh, I beg your pardon! I mean that they are so horribly bungled by the woman who is reading them. Who is she?" "She is my wife, sir."

VISITOR TO EDITORIAL SANCTUM: "Here is an article I have prepared on the Indians." Editor: "Really, my dear sir, we have so many articles on hand that—" Visitor: "I know it. Half the jackasses of the country are writing on the subject, and I thought it was time for me to say something."

WIDOW'S LITTLE DAUGHTER (to young man who is calling on her mother): "I'm not going to be an artist or a poet when I grow up." Young Man: "Well, what are you going to be, Fanny?" Fanny: "I'm going to be like mamma when I grow up. I'll be a rich young widow, and then there will be a different fellow come to court me every evening."

"YOU are a thief and a liar!" exclaimed an angry man to one with whom he had been holding a discussion on some disputed point. The crowd expected to see the individual accused of these crimes defend his honour by attempting the bodily feign of his reviler, but all he did was to reply: "I wish you wouldn't use that tone of voice. It annoys me."

VENERABLE PITTSBURGER (bittering): "Mary, be sparing of the natural gas and the coal." Mary: "Shure, there's plenty more where they kin from." "You're wrong. Scientists say that in a few thousand years the coal will be gone; and the gas will go in a few years. And Camille Flammarion says the sun will go out in less than a hundred thousand years."

TEACHER: "Way, Freddy, how did you get those black and blue wells on your arm?" Scholar: "Them's your fault, teacher!" Teacher: "My fault? What d'you mean?" Scholar (sighing reminiscently): "Why, you told me it was a poor rule that didn't work both ways. So when I went home I took pa's new two-foot rule that doubles up on a hinge and bent it back till it went both ways, and then pa said I'd broken the joints, and he went and got his razor strop. I think it was a mean trick to play on a feller."

SOCIETY.

LACED-UP beddies are again in fashion. The Queen does not intend to visit Buckingham Palace this season.

PATTI says that a child should be taught to sing as soon as it can speak.

The household maintained by the Queen consists of nearly 1,000 persons.

The medical advisers of the young Queen of Holland have strongly impressed on her mother the necessity of absolute quiet for her.

The King and Queen of Italy will celebrate their silver wedding next year, but they have expressed a strong desire that all public demonstrations should be avoided.

From Paris comes the rumour that shorter sleeves are to be worn in day dresses, finished with flowing ruffles of lace, and shorter skirts are made for walking-gowns.

"CAROLIN'S STYVA" is very ill again. Her doctors have forbidden all brain work, and have recommended Her Majesty to remain at Pallanza the whole of the summer.

The granite sarcophagus in which the coffin of the Duke of Clarence is to be enclosed is now finished, and it will very soon be placed in the Albert Memorial Chapel at Windsor, near to the tomb of the Duke of Albany.

THREE of golden shoes for a horse! They are really worn by a Shetland pony belonging to the Shah of Persia. This expensively-shod animal is only twelve and one-half inches high.

THE Duke and Duchess of Teck made a short stay in Paris on their way back to England. They were quietly occupied in seeing pictures, and enjoying the beautiful drives in the city and neighbourhood.

THE Queen has brought home from Coste-belle a large collection of water-colour sketches by Signor Cavelli, a well-known Italian artist at Hyeres, which are to be taken to Balmoral, and they will be hung there in one of her Majesty's sitting-rooms.

PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG is more with the Queen than ever, and will consequently be very little in town. Her Royal Highness is so devoted a daughter that she cannot bear to leave the Queen, who has become dependent upon her constant care and pleasant companionship.

QUEEN VICTORIA thinks more of Queen Elizabeth than of any other of her predecessors. The Virgin Queen's large gold State brooch is in the possession of Queen Victoria, and it contains Elizabeth's hair cut on her coronation day, when Queen Bessie was twenty-five years old; the hair is now faded from red, or chestnut colour, to yellow.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales are happily looking very much better than when they left England. The Princess looks paler, and so do Princesses Victoria and Maud, and the latter is much thinner. Some of the appearance of pallor may, however, be due to the deep mourning which the Royal ladies are now wearing; and it is satisfactory to know that they all declare themselves in excellent health. Returning to all the sad associations has tried the Princess a great deal, but her Royal Highness has all the consolation and all the bravery of a truly good woman. The Duke and Duchess of Fife have been much with the Princess, and Her Royal Highness has been pleased with the society of the little Lady Alexandra Duff, for the Princess of Wales is a most womanly baby worshipper. The Duke of Fife is a great favourite with his Royal mother-in-law, and his Grace's ways with her are quite perfect in their mixture of obsequious respect and sympathetic reverence. Her Royal Highness's smile seems sweeter and more gracious than ever, possibly because we have missed it for so long.

STATISTICS.

THE first photographs produced in England were taken in 1802.

THE oldest English public school is Winchester, founded in 1387.

SEVEN-eighths of the bread baked in London is made of foreign wheat.

BY far the greatest number of flowers have no smell at all. For instance, of the 4,200 species of flowers in Europe, only about 10 per cent. are known to give forth any odour.

A GOLD coin passed from one to another 2,000,000,000 times before the stamp or impression upon it becomes obliterated by friction, while a silver coin changes between 3,250,000,000 times before it becomes entirely effaced.

GEMS.

THE greatest of all pleasure is to give pleasure to one whom we love.

MARK your mistakes teach you something. Moses never lost his temper in the wilderness but once.

THE man who is trusting in Heaven with all his heart never trembles for the crop when he hears it thunder.

WE must realise the fact that there is nothing in life unless it has a purpose. A noble aim uplifts life; a mean and low aim degrades it.

YOU must love in order to understand love. One act of charity will teach us more of the love of Heaven than a thousand sermons. One act of unselfishness, of real self-denial, will tell us more of the meaning of the Epiphany than whole volumes in theology.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

A BAKED lemon is an excellent remedy for hoarseness, and one often resorted to by singers and public speakers. The lemon is baked like an apple, and a little of the heated and thickened juice squeezed over lumpy sugar.

NUT CAKE.—Three eggs, one cup of sugar, one-half cup of butter, one and one-half cups of flour, one-half cup of milk, one teaspoonful of cream tartar, one-half teaspoonful of soda, and one-half cup of English walnuts.

RICE SOUP.—Rice-soup is made by boiling a carrot and small turnip in two quarts of weak stock, or the liquor in which poultry or a joint has been boiled, with a teaspoonful of well-washed rice and the white part of four large leeks sliced, for half an hour; then fish out the carrot and turnip, add a tablespoonful of finely-minced parsley, and, if liked, a cupful of good milk; and season to taste. Boil for five minutes; and serve.

SPIRED FISH.—Butter the bottom of a stone pot, put in a layer of fish, then a small quantity of mace and whole allspice. Repeat the layers until within two inches of the top of the pot; add one and a half teaspoonfuls of salt, cover with cider vinegar, place a dish over the pot, and put in the oven with a slow fire for six hours. Fish so prepared makes a convenient and acceptable relish for breakfast or tea. It will keep any length of time. Any fish may be prepared in this way.

AN excellent and easy way to cook potatoes is to peel them; place them in a tin dish—a large pie-pan is suitable. Put into the pan a cupful of water, and sprinkle a little salt over all. Then put a bit of butter about the size of a cherry pit on each potato, and put them into a hot oven. Be careful that they do not burn, but just brown nicely. They should bake about fifteen or twenty minutes if the fire is good. Try them with a fork as you would if they were boiled. Serve them hot, and the family will be certain to relish them.

MISCELLANEOUS.

CATS do not stop growing until they are a year old.

THE smoke from an expiring candle is poisonous.

FIG-trees and cedars are rarely struck by lightning.

THE donkey is the longest lived amongst our domestic animals.

THE death penalty has just been resumed in Switzerland. For twenty-five years it had been abolished.

ETHER has become so general a Russian tipple that the Government has interfered to prevent its use.

THERE is a brisk trade in second-hand tombstones in London. Still stranger is the custom of selling family vaults partly filled.

THE Koh-i-Noor, or "mountain of light," is stated to have been discovered in the diamond mines of Golconda more than 3,000 years ago.

A FINE collection of seventeenth-century tobacco-pipes has just been found under an old London cellar and deposited in the Guildhall Museum.

AS an instance of the remarkable cheapness of Chinese labour, we note that in Chinese courts of justice witnesses can be hired at a pence apiece to testify on either side of the question at issue, or on both sides for ninepence.

THE Marquis of Salisbury divides with the late Earl of Beaconsfield the honour of having his portrait placed over the entrance to the Queen's own rooms, by which we mean Her Majesty's sitting room, bed-room, &c., which are more sacred and less approachable than even the "Private Apartments," and into which none enter but members of the Royal Family and their intimate personal friends.

FEW people outside professional circles realise the remedial value of champagne. Properly administered, in small quantities at short intervals, it is the best possible stimulant to keep up strength and vitality through acutely wasting disease. Before the cork is drawn make ready another that will go easily into the bottle's mouth, yet fit close enough to admit of turning it bottom upward. Pour out the exact measure, put in the new cork and plunge the bottle, cork down, in a pitcher of cool water. Kept thus, the last dose will have nearly as much sparkle as the first. Any other effervescent liquid can be kept the same way. Champagne, given alternately with milk and lime water, will stay on the most irritated stomach and keep up the strength for a month's siege of the hottest fever.

THE present Czarina, as an interesting writer in *M. Jules Simon's* excellent *Revue de Famille* points out, is the first Russian Empress who is small and slight, graceful though dignified, always young and always lively. But since Alexander III. ascended the throne after the murder of Alexander II. the Czarina has never been free from anxiety for her consort's safety. "She resolved, there and then, never to leave the Czar for a single moment. She placed herself, as it were, between him and the would-be assassins, covering him as with a pure angel's wing, and the Czar, superstitious as it behoves a true Russian to be, regards her as a protecting spirit, as a divinity among his penates. She accompanies him everywhere—to the reviews, the camps, and on his journeys." The Empress, besides being a model wife, is also a model mother. She has had six children, of whom five are living. When the sixth baby died the Empress herself carried the little coffin in her carriage to the grave, like any woman of the people would have done. She worships her children, and is never easy when they are absent. When the Czarowitch returned from his tour round the world, the Empress fell on his neck, and welcomed him back with loud sobs.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. P.—Coventry is a city.
TOPSY.—You must consult a solicitor.
HAWK.—No license is needed to sell rabbits.
H. N.—All arrears of rent may be sued for.
JACKASS.—The duty on brandy is the same as that on whisky.
CONNIE.—The 93rd are at Daghah, Bengal, East India. Write there.
MAOPIN.—For creaking shoes, oil them at the sides of the soles.
TALBOT.—Debts for liquor consumed on the premises cannot be recovered by law.
REPENTANT.—Giving a false statement of age does not nullify a marriage.
MAID MARION.—The Royal Scots, oldest infantry regiment on service, has most honours.
LADY ELIZABETH.—Lady Elisabeth ran for the Derby of 1893, won by Blue Gown.
MAY BLOSSOM.—The Duchess of Teck is Queen Victoria's cousin; husband no relation.
GUITA.—The property of a son dying intestate and unmarried goes to the father.
LOVE-SICK SWAIN.—Stamp upside down right-hand corner—"My heart is another's." Write no more.
SUSY.—We do not know what you mean by the "State recognizing" the child.
ARTIE.—The Scotch mark was worth 18 pence and one-third of a penny sterling.
JACK THE ROVER.—Our own idea is that the one way to remove Indian ink marks is to remove the skin.
A. T.—A landlord cannot distrain on premises after they have passed to another owner.
ROBITA.—No value. Merely a picture printed to suit a passing popularity. It has no historic worth.
LEONARD.—You have no right to make any erection on or about the back without having a regular title to the ground.
DICK.—Return your uniform and equipments, and write to the headquarters of your regiment. It will be all right.
W. F. O.—We must refer you to a patent agent or to the Patent Office, 25, Southampton Buildings, London, W.C.
A MARTYR.—Headaches originate in many ways. Which way is yours? One should know something about that in order to suggest a remedy.
AN ADMIRER OF THE "READER."—Mrs. Henry Wood, who wrote "East Lynne," died on February 10, 1887. The novel named is considered her best production.
GIPSY.—So far as we know, there is no power to compel a local authority to set aside any part of a public cemetery to be consecrated.
WILL.—You are entirely in the right. Now send the account with your cheque in payment, and you will have done all that is incumbent on you.
SCHOOL-BOY.—The line, "Pity the sorrows of a poor old man," is the first of a poem entitled "The Beggar," written by Thomas Moss.
A DREAMER.—Poetry is a drug everywhere. No paper or other publication cares for it; that is the simple fact. Could not name any paper likely to suit.
RUBIN.—Pierce Egan wrote a novel entitled "Robin Hood." Any bookseller will tell you if it is in print, and, if so, the price.
L. Y.—Your ten cubic feet of luggage can be all clothes if you like. See that every suit has been worn at least a few days.
PETER.—The National Debt (1891) was £579,473,082. In 1891 it was about £280,000,000, and there has been a gradual decrease since that date.
BEW.—The owner has a right to reclaim his pigeon, and no one has a right to detain it from him or to demand compensation for giving it up.
SOPHIE.—Not at all rare, we think; you are describing the ordinary Victorian crown piece, which differs very materially from the Georgian coin.
AN INQUIRER.—The list of questions is just a little too formidable. It would take more time than we can devote to an individual correspondent's requirements.
DAK.—You need not try to make printer's ink. The process is complicated, and requires nice skill, so that a mere recipe would hardly be of any use to you.
BLUESBELL.—Quite customary for golfers to paint their own golf balls. Some are ordinary white paint with a good deal of terebinth in it; others use Arpall's enamel.
H. M.—The Isle of Wight, in the English Channel, off the south coast of England, has continual communication by steamboats with Portsmouth and Southampton.
ROSE.—Population of England in 1891, 27,482,140; Wales, 1,518,914; Channel Islands, 147,870; Scotland, 4,083,103; Ireland, 4,706,162.
T. M.—A Reserve man is already in the service, therefore cannot engage abroad. A man cannot be "in" as two men, and the Government is already paying him as one man in the Reserve.

ANGELINA.—"Beve d'Or" means a "golden dream."
GEORDIE.—The Bourse of Paris is the best known, but similar exchanges exist in the other French cities. Bourse is a general term corresponding to 'Change in English and American cities.
FAITE.—To transfer the policy an assignment must be executed, duly stamped, and intimated to the insurance company. It must not be mediated. You should consult the company.
FRANCESCA.—Acadia was the original name of Nova Scotia, and L'ungfellow made the compulsory removal of the French inhabitants of Acadia, in 1755, the subject of his poem of "Evangeline."
F. R.—You can go to Utah and settle there without being a Mormon, and we think that is by far the wiser plan to follow if you either do not know or do not approve of the Mormon doctrines.
TOM.—During the "railway race" of two years ago from London to Scotland on the rival lines, the engineers on the London and North-Western especially occasionally ran up to 80 miles an hour on level ground.
BASIL.—If you allow the bowl of your meerschaum to get hot, you will probably have great difficulty in colouring it. Smoke slowly, and put a pearl button in the bowl.
S. A.—There is no salary attached to the Premiership. The Minister who is Premier also fills some office of emolument. Lord Salisbury, for example, is also Foreign Secretary.
MINFORTUNE.—The landlord must take your notice to quit, even though you are in arrears of rent. He can distrain for the rent, or after you have left he can sue you in the county court.
JOYCE.—Lime-jule, obtained from the sweet lime, chiefly in Montserrat, is now largely used instead of the lemon as an agreeable acid; and is employed in the British navy as a preventive of scurvy.

A SPRING SONG.

When all the world goes sweet-hearting—
 When all the world is young—
 In cowslip-time, in blackbird-time,
 The waking fields among,
 Give me thy hand, my dearest love,
 And come abroad to see;
 The land is full of love and hope—
 And so is life to me!
 The starling's love, in long, shy calls,
 Comes from the leading trees;
 And thrush and chaffinch swell the tale
 Adown the moist, warm breeze.
 See, primrose and anemone
 From the soft ground have sprung;
 And the green earth is all in bud—
 For all the world is young!
 Come, let us "smell the dew and rain,"
 Now it is overpast;
 For every breath is incense-fraught,
 The Spring is here at last!
 And gone is Winter's long, dark night,
 And fair has dawned love's day.
 Sweetheart, we never can grow old—
 It must be always May! M. T.

COCKNEY.—The circumference of Venice, Italy, is about eight miles. From every direction the city is described as seeming "to be floating on water, and presenting a unique appearance of fairy-like picture-queeness."

T. F. G.—We doubt the possibility of making a suggestion regarding rabbit pest which has not already been made; but write to Agent-General for New South Wales, Westminster Chambers, 9, Victoria Street, London, S.W.

ERIQUETTE.—Not necessary, because the parties are on their wedding jaunt by the time the cards reach you. Should you afterwards receive an intimation that the parties are at home, either call or write to express your congratulation.

SHEDY.—No good or certain remedy for "glare" on coats. Take spoonful of ox gall in quart of warm rain-water, sponge thoroughly with that, then go over with clean rain-water, and dry; that is usually effective. Some succeed by sponging with benzine.

IN NEED OF ADVICE.—Ridiculous. Let him sell the dog if he has not patience to train it to his own idea. You are not obliged to receive it back, and should positively refuse to do so. The man's objection is frivolous.

CONSTANT READER.—Philadelphia or Boston may suit you. Always something going, but there, as here, the summer season is not the best season. Should think you may be able to fall into a constancy about end of autumn.

FRANKLESS.—It is sometimes thought that the emigrant is benefited by leaving himself at liberty to choose between competing lines of railway to his destination when he arrives in New York; but we think it a greater convenience to take through tickets from the steamboat companies.

IGNORANT.—The order of the Royal succession at present is the Prince of Wales, Prince George, the Duchess of Fife, Lady Alexandra Duff (her infant daughter), Princess Victoria and Princess Maud. All these would have to pass away without issue before the Duke of Edinburgh could come to the throne.

WORRIED HUSBAND.—Advertising that you will not be responsible for debts contracted by your wife does not free you from liability. To protect yourself you must give notice to individual tradesmen not to trust her.

MAY-QUEEN.—May-Day jollifications originated in the old Roman festival in honour of Flora, goddess of flowers, held from April 28 to May 3. The name May comes from the old Saxon *Maj*, "youthful beauty," and that, in turn, is supposed to have the East Indian *Mays* the Hindoo goddess of nature, for its ancestor.

WAX WIFE.—We should say decidedly have the whole hair trimmed to a uniform or proportionate length, then wear it in the style most becoming to your face and figure. A good deal of liberty can be taken in that direction by a married woman, as long as she does not affect a bold style, which is not becoming in any but girls of 16 years or under.

HOUSEHOLD WRENCH.—The suggestion is offered by a clever needle-woman that a better stocker damier than the wooden or porcelain egg or polished solid cup is a discarded slipper sole, or rather the sole of a discarded slipper, for the two should remain united. This inserted in the stocking offers a smooth and more available surface for stretching the hole over than any other.

A BASHFUL SWAIN.—It is not considered in the best taste for a young man to go into the house after he has escorted a young lady home, unless there are other members of the family in the party. Young ladies do not like to seem to dismiss an escort, and often invite him in through politeness, even though they may in their hearts hope he will not accept of their invitation. It is often the occasion of a sharp reprimand, the next morning, an unpleasantness to which no well-intentioned young man would willingly subject a lady.

S. O.—The difference between old and new style reckoning is 10 days, which Pope Gregory XIII. ordained in 1582 should be deducted from the calendar in order to make the year correspond with the exact revolution of the earth round the sun, the previous arrangement made by Julius Cæsar 45 years before Christ having gone wrong to the extent of 11 minutes yearly, and that having accumulated to 10 days in Pope Gregory's time, when the vernal equinox was found to be falling on the 16th instead of 21st March. In 1751 an Act was passed in British Parliament ordaining 11 days to be omitted; that is the difference between new and old style in this country.

GEOR.—Alessandro Stradella, the Italian musician, had a very romantic career, and met a tragic end. He was a singer, violinist, and composer. While teaching, at Venice, a noble Roman lady, by name Mortenata, he fell in love with her, and, finding his love reciprocated, proposed an elopement, and fled with her to Rome. A Venetian nobleman, who also loved Mortenata, employed men to assassinate Stradella, but, overcome by the music he was directing in a church in Rome, abandoned his purpose. Informed by them of the plot to kill him, the people hastened to Turin, and were there married. Other assassins were engaged, and Stradella was finally wounded, but not seriously. Subsequently at Genoa they were both murdered.

IGNORAMUS.—Aden is a very important peninsula of Arabia. It was taken possession of by Great Britain in 1839. It is 118 miles from the entrance to the Red Sea. It comprises an area of between 13 and 20 miles, and is of volcanic origin, consisting chiefly of a range of hills, which rise from 1,000 to 1,700 feet high. It enjoys almost perpetual sunshine, a cloudy day being very rare. It is a place of considerable strength, and is well garrisoned, its situation between Asia and Africa resembling that of Gibraltar between Europe and Africa, an excellent port renders it a valuable station en route from India to Europe as a coaling depot. The water supply is maintained by the use of the ancient cisterns, in which the scanty rainfall is stored, and by the distillation of sea-water.

ONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO KNOW.—The difference between an heir apparent and an heir presumptive is not always clearly understood; here is the case in a nutshell: The heir apparent must succeed if he survives the present holder of the dignity; while an heir presumptive, although the heir at the moment, is liable to have his right to the succession defeated by the birth of another heir. There cannot, therefore, be at the same time an heir apparent and an heir presumptive. To take a modern instance, should the Prince of Wales succeed to the throne of England, his son, Prince George, if then living, will become the heir apparent to the throne. Should Prince George succeed to the throne before he has children, the Duchess of Fife would be the heir presumptive, her right to the succession being always liable to be defeated by the birth of a direct heir to her brother.

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